

Subsection 4.—Services for the Disabled and Chronically Ill

Hospitals, public health departments, rehabilitation centres and voluntary agencies are placing greater emphasis on the provision of rehabilitation services to the chronically ill and disabled, an objective encouraged by the success of rehabilitation programs for war veterans, injured workmen and other groups and, more recently, by the federal-provincial vocational rehabilitation program (see pp. 305-306). The National Health Grant Program and the hospital insurance plans have promoted better preventive health services and patient care, for example, the effective poliomyelitis inoculation programs and the development of physical medicine and rehabilitation facilities in general and chronic hospitals and separate rehabilitation centres. Similarly, the rapid expansion of psychiatric units in general hospitals with out-patient and day care facilities has overcome some of the barriers to treatment of the mentally ill. There is greater concern, also, for the standards of care in nursing homes, homes for the aged and related facilities.

Some communities and health districts operate services for the chronically ill and elderly in their own homes including home nursing, homemaker services, organized home care and services for the homebound; several out-patient geriatric centres are also in operation. Although public health departments are more aware of their primary role in identifying chronically ill and disabled persons of all ages, in the study of the health and social problems of this group and in co-ordinating services, existing services and facilities are generally considered to be inadequate, partly because of shortages of rehabilitation personnel.

Medical rehabilitation services are chiefly oriented to functional recovery although some centres include social, vocational or educational services. By the end of 1962, physical medicine and rehabilitation departments were established in 30 general hospitals, 10 chronic hospitals and 14 children's hospitals, as well as in the veterans hospitals. In addition, there were 43 independent rehabilitation centres (14 of them in-patient centres) including 23 children's centres and four workmen's compensation centres, serving the more seriously disabled. Most of the public mental hospitals and tuberculosis sanatoria provide one or more of the services that aid in rehabilitation such as physical and occupational therapy, social service and after-care and recreational, educational and vocational services. Community agencies co-operate in the post-hospital adjustment and rehabilitation of these patients. The best example of comprehensive medical-social care of the chronically ill and disabled is the integrated program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Complementing the general and specialized medical rehabilitation programs are the numerous out-patient clinics, held mainly at the teaching hospitals, for a broad range of chronic or disabling conditions. Among these are clinics for orthopaedic conditions, speech and hearing, vision, glaucoma, cleft palate, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, arthritis and rheumatism, and cardiac conditions; mental health clinics also serve the mentally retarded (see p. 282). Many voluntary agencies concerned with specific disabilities or health services provide patient services that assist in home care and rehabilitation. In all provinces voluntary agencies also operate sheltered workshops for the disabled and, on a limited scale, employment and recreation services to the homebound.

A number of provincial health departments have set up handicapped children's registries and, in co-operation with the handicapped children's societies, they provide remedial treatment and education at children's hospitals, rehabilitation centres and special schools. Several provinces are extending those registries to include disabled adults. The public school systems in the larger cities operate special classes for children with orthopaedic, vision, hearing and mental defects; voluntary agencies also sponsor special classes for the