

6.2.1 Public health services

6.2.1.1 Occupational health

Services designed to prevent accidents and occupational diseases and to maintain the health of employees are the common concern of provincial health departments, labour departments, workmen's compensation boards and industrial management. Provincial agencies regulate working conditions and offer consultant and educational services to industry. All provinces have legislation (factory Acts, shop Acts, mines Acts, workmen's compensation Acts) setting standards for health safety and accident prevention on the job. Most provinces maintain environmental health laboratories that study industrial health problems such as the effects of noise and air conditions on workers.

6.2.1.2 Communicable disease control

The larger provincial health departments have separate divisions of communicable disease control headed by full-time epidemiologists; in others, this function is combined with one or more community health services. Local health authorities organize public clinics for immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, whooping cough, smallpox and measles. They also engage in case-finding and diagnostic services in co-operation with public health laboratories and private physicians. Special services for tuberculosis and venereal disease are described in Sections 6.2.3.1 and 6.2.3.3.

6.2.1.3 Health education

Most provincial health departments have a division or unit of health education under a full-time professional "health educator" to promote public knowledge of health needs and measures. These divisions provide educational materials to other divisions of the health department, local health authorities, schools, voluntary associations, and to the public. Many educational activities are directed to accident prevention and to changing habits harmful to health, such as cigarette smoking and the excessive use of alcohol and other drugs. All health workers carry out health education as part of their normal activities.

6.2.1.4 Public health laboratories

All provinces maintain a central public health laboratory and most have branch laboratories to assist local health agencies and the medical profession in the protection of community health and the control of infectious diseases. Public health bacteriology (testing of milk, water and food), diagnostic bacteriology, and pathology are the principal functions of the laboratory service, with medical testing for physicians and hospitals steadily increasing in volume.

6.2.1.5 Maternal and child health

Public health nurses employed by local health services carry out programs of preventive health care to mothers, the newborn and children through clinics, home and hospital visits and school health services. All provincial health departments have established maternal and child health consultant services to co-operate with the public health nursing services. The maternal and child health services also undertake studies in maternal and child care, including hospital care, and assist in the training of nursing personnel.

6.2.1.6 Nutrition

Provincial health departments and some city health departments employ consultants in nutrition to extend technical guidance and education to health and welfare agencies, nursing homes and other care institutions and hospitals. They also provide diet counselling to selected patient groups such as diabetics, and conduct nutritional surveys and other research.

6.2.1.7 Dental health

Public dental health programs at the provincial level have been largely preventive, but increasing emphasis is now being given to dental care. Dental clinics conducted by local health services are generally restricted to pre-school and younger school-age groups. A number of provinces send dental teams to remote areas and subsidize resident dentists to practise in areas lacking such services, while the four western provinces have dental care schemes of varying coverage for welfare recipients. Other dental health programs are directed to the training of dentists and dental hygienists, conducting dental surveys, and the extension of water fluoridation.