WORK AT A DAY NURSERY

BY

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This is a report of the work done at a day nursery (Battersea Central Mission) from September, 1944, to December, 1945, during which time 60 children between the ages of 2 and 5 years attended. The nursery is situated in a poor district in South London, and suffered a fair amount from "buzz-bombs" and rocket bombs. The work can be classified under three headings: (1) preventive medicine; (2) social and psychological medicine; and (3) treatment of minor ailments and injuries.

Preventive Medicine

Our lines of attack in prevention are the three usual ones: maintenance of general health, early isolation, and immunization or similar active measures. The record for infectious diseases over the period under review is as follows:

Complaint	No. of Cases	Time of Occurrence
Measles	10	Feb., 1945, 3 cases; March and April, 1945, 7 cases
Mumps	1	June, 1945
Chicken-pox ..	7	July, 1945, 1 case; Sept., 1945, 6 cases
Whooping-cough ..	3	Oct., 1945
Scabies	3	Sept., 1945—two of these were brother and sister
Impetigo	1 (secondary to scabies)	
Scarlet fever ..	None	
Diphtheria	"	
Gastro-enteritis ..	"	

Maintenance of General Health.—(1) All children have to present a doctor's certificate recommending their admission to the nursery and also after being away sick with any infectious condition. (2) New entrants are medically examined on admission. (3) Routine medical examinations are made at frequent intervals, with weighing. (4) The diet is balanced, with an adequate vitamin intake. (Ultra-violet light and carbon-arc and mercury-vapour lamps are available in the physiotherapy department.) (5) A rest period is arranged, and there is a regular routine. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that our children would not have a regular routine, discipline, or proper meals in their own homes. The usual diet would be bread and jam, chips, or ice-cream, taken when hunger or fancy dictated, and eaten in the street in all probability. Their priority oranges and eggs are often sold to adults or given away to sick friends. Even toddlers play in the streets on their own until late at night—without any rest during the day. A fair number, through absence of training, wet themselves during the day up to 4 or 5 years, and at night up to 7 years.

Early Isolation.—The matron has had much experience in fever hospitals and quickly notices any child that is "off-colour"; it is put in the isolation-room at once. All children's heads are inspected for lice on arrival and "spots" are also looked for. The fact that we have had only 3 cases of scabies in 60 children over a period of 15 months is proof of her efficiency.

Active Measures.—(1) No child is accepted now for the nursery unless it has been immunized against diphtheria within two years, or its parents agree to our carrying out immunization or reimmunization at once. The children were Schick-tested before reimmunization in November, 1944, but this year, owing to the occurrence of a few cases of diphtheria in the district, all those nearing the end of the two years were promptly reimmunized. So far we have not Schick-tested the children following immunization. (2) We recommend vaccination when it has not been done, but do not insist as in the case of diphtheria immunization. (3) Patch tuberculin tests are carried out on any child that is not doing well. Nine children tested were all negative and gained well after a course of ultra-violet ray treatment. We hope to make a routine patch-test on new admissions in the future. (4) Through the courtesy of the L.C.C. Southern Group Laboratory we were able to give 10 ml. of adult measles serum to each of 13 children during the measles epidemic of January-April, 1945. We had no

reactions. The children selected were the youngest and most delicate of those who had not already had measles. Only one child of the 13 contracted measles. This was a mild attack, occurring 9 weeks after injection, in a delicate only child subject to bronchitis. The medical officer of health for Battersea informs me that 1,029 cases were reported for the district from Jan. 1 to March 31, 1945. We had eight cases amongst our 60 children in the same period—38 of the children had not had measles before. (5) In October, 1945, following two cases of whooping-cough in the nursery, I carried out a series of whooping-cough inoculations. Four children had the combined whooping-cough vaccine and A.P.T. in the usual dosages at weekly intervals except for the fourth dose, which was given one month after the third. Nineteen children had slightly increased doses of the standard "A" whooping-cough vaccine (Parke Davis 4,000 million Bordets per ml.). In view of the much larger doses used in America, the doses given were 0.75, 1, 1.25, and 1.5 ml. In four of these 19 local swelling and redness followed the second dose, and in each case the child was 3 years old. In these four cases the remaining doses were kept at 1 ml., and there have been no reactions. Up to date only one case of whooping-cough has developed, and that in a child who had a cough at the time of inoculation. The case was a severe one, complicated by bronchopneumonia. The interval between the first three doses was three days. The fourth dose was given three weeks after the third.

Social Medicine

From September, 1944, until August, 1945, we had in the nursery two mentally defective children—brother and sister. The boy, aged 5 years, had been unable to speak, and his mother had been advised to send him to the Fountain Hospital as a hopeless case. The little boy was of an affectionate disposition, and became able, after some months in the nursery among normal children younger than himself, to say one or two sentences and to make very good efforts to get himself understood. During the war we could find no speech clinics which could take him, and we did not have sufficient staff to give him individual dancing or exercise lessons. The matron, however, trained him to put out the cups and plates for tea and to collect the dirty things after a meal. His star sentence became, "Can I collect up the cups?" but it needed a little skill to understand him. The teacher also discovered that he had an excellent sense of rhythm and could beat in time to music. He is of course now attending a special school under the new Act. The sister, aged 3 years, also mentally defective, could speak, but we could not establish as much contact with her. Her twin was normal.

Conclusion

Day nurseries are of supreme importance in improving the health of the coming generation and form a link between the infant welfare clinic and the school clinic during the important years between the ages of 2 and 5 years. Those who are the only child and mild mentally defective cases benefit greatly from contact with other children and from expert handling by a trained staff.

The Year Book of Radiology is now so well established that the 1945 edition needs no introduction to the radiological world. As before, it has as editors C. A. Waters and W. B. Firor in diagnosis, and I. I. Kaplan in therapy. Each subject occupies about half the book. The diagnostic half contains references to many articles of importance. In the section on bones and joints articles of note are those on stress fractures of the 1st rib by Alverson and others, "Significant Skeletal Changes in the Hand" by Holt and Hodges, and one by Holmgren, of Sweden, on free fat in the knee-joint after injury. From the Mayo Clinic comes a report on six cases of Allbright's disease. Lloyd Rusby's important review of 246 cases of dermoids and teratomas of the mediastinum receives due prominence, as does O. A. Nelson's interesting work on arteriography of the abdominal aorta. In the same section is Baker and Miller's account of 100 consecutive cases of venography of the lower limbs. The section on radiotherapy again gives a comprehensive account of recent work in the various branches of this subject, including radiobiology. The 1945 yearbook (H. K. Lewis and Co.; 30s.) well maintains the high standard set by its predecessors, and will be valued by all who are fortunate enough to obtain a copy.