ELEVEN YEARS' WORK IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL DENTAL CLINIC

BY

T. C. STRETTON, L.D.S. R.C.S.ENG.

DENTAL SURGEON

AND

G. E. FRIEND, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

MEDICAL OFFICER

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL, HORSHAM

An account of a public school dental clinic carried on under uniform conditions during the eleven years from 1923 to 1933 inclusive may be of practical interest. The school in question, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, has an average boy population of over 800, the yearly turnover being about 150. The boys are under regular dental supervision, the dental surgeon attending one day a week during term time, and where after-care is necessary it is carried out by the resident medical officer. The figures obtained in the dental record are of interest, and we are prompted to show the further improvement possible in a school which in 1923 was already comparatively clean-mouthed.

In 1923 attention was centred, as previously, on the discovery and rectification of caries, and on the irregularity of teeth, etc. In September, 1925, dental certificates were required for new boys entering the school, and in November of the same year a "clean mouth campaign" was instituted. It was considered that the best way further to improve the oral condition of the boys was to institute a standard for cleanliness. Clean gums and teeth are conducive to the prevention of pyorrhoea alveolaris and caries, and to the improvement of health through the reduction of those minor ailments and diseases which are conveyed by droplet infection.

The work at Christ's Hospital comprises: (1) charting cavities; (2) notifying parents of irregularity of teeth; (3) carrying out any urgent extractions; (4) doing urgent temporary or permanent fillings; (5) adjusting regulation appliances; and (6) dealing with accidents—for example, fractured, loosened, or evulsed teeth, or fractured jaws. Routine examination is made on every boy, when the mouth is graded. Each house (about fifty boys) is examined as a whole, and any caries or irregularity of the teeth is notified to the parent for attention next holidays, only urgent repair work or extraction being done at school. Every boy whose mouth requires attention is seen at the beginning of the next term, to make sure that the work has been carried out; in those cases where this has not been, or is improperly, done, a second report (or in occasional stubborn cases a personal letter) is sent, and followed up until the work is completed. This system of examination appears to us, after ten years' experience, to be sufficient to ensure a healthy condition of the mouths throughout the school. Occasions for controversy arise principally from the neglect of parents to take boys to a dentist. Disputes do not arise between the home dentist and ourselves.

Since January, 1926, the boys have been graded into four divisions of oral cleanliness: A1, 1, 2, 3. A1 and 1 indicate clean mouths, the view being taken that it is more of an incentive to the boys to be classified as A1 and 1 for clean mouths than as 1 and 2. A1 is a super-clean mouth, and 1 is a clean mouth with, say, fillings or loosening deciduous teeth, making a distinguishing difference. The other two divisions, 2 and 3, indicate dirty and very dirty mouths. The boys in these divisions have to be rendered A1 or 1 with hard brush drill and scaling and cleaning, and have to attend regular inspections until the teeth are clean enough for the boy's promotion. In cases of stomatitis suitable mouth-washes are prescribed, and remedial treatment is given. Tonsils and adenoids and other possible causes of oral sepsis also receive attention.

This yearly classification has been carried out in the same manner since 1926, and the progress which has been made is shown in the following table:

TABLE I.—Grading of Mouths (Excluding New Boys)

Grade	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
A 1	463	526	550	546	580	573	603	572
1	301	240	234	228	199	186	178	206
2	40	22	22	18	13	12	19	14
3	11	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total examined	815	792	806	792	792	771	800	792
Percentage								
A 1	56.8	66.4	68.2	69.0	73.2	74.1	75.4	72.2
1	37.0	30.3	29.0	28.7	25.1	24.0	22.2	26.0
2	4.9	2.8	2.7	2.2	1.6	1.5	2.3	1.7
3	1.3	0.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
A 1 plus 1	93.8	96.7	97.2	97.7	98.3	98.4	97.6	98.2
2 plus 3	6.2	3.3	2.7	2.2	1.6	1.5	2.3	1.7

This campaign for "clean mouths" has been easily conducted at Christ's Hospital. Occasionally masters have been appealed to when the whole house has been backward, but for the individual case the house captain has always carried out instructions, and has seen that the gums and teeth of those boys who were dilatory in scrubbing them were in a better condition when next inspected. In fact, the label of a 2 or 3 is considered a stigma by the boys.

A point of great value is to investigate and explain the reason for a lapse from a clean mouth to one of poorer grade. The usual cause is either laziness, coupled with a weak arm and a soft toothbrush, or a lapse in general health—for example, by the development of chronic sepsis in tonsils and adenoids. From Table I it will be seen that Class 3 mouths are now non-existent, and that the number in Class 2 is vastly reduced. Also there is a general elevation from Class 1 to the peerage of A1. Coupled with this increase in the number of clean mouths there has been about a 20 per cent. reduction in the number of cavities, and a 14 per cent. reduction in the number of boys with carious teeth.

After ten years' work on these lines we are of the opinion that an average figure of 1.5 cavities per boy is the irreducible minimum of caries, and 2 per cent. that of mouths below Grade 1. When such a clean mouth campaign is carried out systematically there is the tremendous prospect that teeth will be retained longer than at present, and that pyorrhoea alveolaris and such conditions will be deferred, if not altogether avoided, with the result that this improved condition must repercuss upon the general health of the individual and the community.

TABLE II.—Caries (Including New Boys)

Year	Number of Boys without Caries	Number of Boys with Caries	Percentage of Boys with Caries	Cavities per Boy
1923	355	432	54.8	1.95
1924	444	399	47.3	1.82
1925	556	357	39.1	1.69
1926	499	424	45.9	1.68
1927	534	366	40.6	1.69
1928	505	386	43.3	1.60
1929	523	381	42.1	1.69
1930	488	379	43.7	1.75
1931	563	331	37.0	1.46
1932	478	324	40.3	1.54
1933	583	320	35.4	1.57