

THE RELATION OF COUNTY TUBERCULOSIS HOSPITALS TO CONSERVATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

JAMES Y. WELBORN, M. D.

The broad subject of conservation, although in its infancy, is far reaching in its achievements. Like all innovations, appearing at first as current events, gradually enveloping established customs, making history for an epoch, this idea has grown.

The preponderance of forces necessary for any custom, event, political or social decree, upon which a nation reaches a destiny, has, as an essential for success, to be presented at such an opportune time as to arouse this nation's people to a keen interest. The time, the place, the demand and the recognition are all essential forces for any substantial movement.

The phase of our subject I proclaim to be of the greatest importance, because in conserving the health of the people, we thereby promote conditions for a more perfect physical being necessary to reach a goal of ideal perfection. This is true because upon the public health depends the degree of success in arts and sciences and the good spirit of the human race. It may also be added, in the language of Ex-Governor Marshall, "That upon the public health rests the state of the morals of the people."

Now, how do the County Antituberculosis Society movements conserve public health?

First, by an education: teaching sanitary science and preventing loathsome disease. An example of this is demonstrated by the following: A patient of an ordinary family is treated in the hospital. While there, receiving visits from other members, they learn that to eradicate flies and mosquitoes is a means of saving doctors' and druggists' bills, by preventing malaria and other diseases. They are cited to the necessity of destroying all sputa and dejecta from the body as a means of self-protection. They are shown, to some extent, at least, how to select foods, as to variety and purity, and there are innumerable items to be learned relative to sanitary conditions.

Second, presenting to the people a plea that vice, excesses, loathsome

habits and poisons are dangerous to good health. Various examples can be pointed out—for instance, late hours, alcohol and tobacco, which are prime factors in precipitating severe cases in many of our young men patients. When they are set up as examples to the observing public it often astonishes them as something they had not before thought of. I must also emphasize that when the society is urging all these teachings it forces many negligent physicians to realize the necessity of more strict orders to their patients.

Third, by teaching economy in caring for such victims, thereby reserving forces to be utilized in aggression rather than defense. With resultant effect of the facts in the first and second, there is the beginning of economy, which effects are tremendous in the end, for every case of prevention is the means of saving thousands of dollars, which if saved for other pursuits of the proper kind must broaden the field of attainment by a people physically more able to do work than those weakened by personal or family sickness.

Fourth, that life may be sustained over the disease which has long been thought to be fatal. There are now hundreds of strong working people in the State of Indiana who, if they had not had the intelligent advice and treatment of the society workers, would have been sleeping under sod waiting for other victims of their own infection who were serving their days of invalidism.

The growth of the movement by local organizations has brought about the idea that a united effort is necessary to accomplish the foregoing. As a result, in our state we now have statutes giving power to county commissioners to establish county hospitals for tuberculous (indigent) patients, or to contract with county organizations for the care of such patients. This enables charitable organizations to conduct more successfully the institutions they are establishing. In fact, if this law had not come into effect, public charity could not support the crying demands. Such a failure would gradually burden the cheerful donor, and baffle the philanthropic workers. When such cooperation exists, civil and charitable forces are also supported by individuals able to pay small but reasonable sums for attention, instead of great amounts necessary in seeking distant health resorts. I will suggest that cooperation in this state, will enable each group of people to learn the most conservative methods to be employed in this branch of work. A monthly state journal should be published, in which the workers of this state can embody system and cooperation of efforts.