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THE MOST IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT TASK

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/Following is the translation of an article by Deputy Minister of Health BSSR I.B. Kardash entitled "Vazhneyshaya Gosudarstvennaya Zadacha" (English version above) in Zdravookhraneniye Belorussii (Public Health of Belorussia), Vol6, No5, Minsk, May 1960, pages 3-7./

New evidence of the concern of the party and government for the health of the population and the improvement of the latter's welfare was the 14 January 1960 resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) and the Council of Ministers USSR "Concerning means for the further improvement of the medical care and health protection of the population of the USSR". Among the tasks imposed by the party and government is the elimination within the next few years of some, and the sharp reduction of other, contagious diseases.

In accordance with this resolution the CC CP of Belorussia and the Council of Ministers BSSR have devised and approved measures for the elimination in the republic within the next three to four years of diphtheria, tularemia, poliomyelitis, trachoma, syphilis, and rabies and the sharp reduction of the morbidity rate of typhoid fever, acute intestinal infections, tuberculosis, whooping cough, brucellosis, and ascariasis.

The following are envisaged:

Elimination of diphtheria. In 1959 the diphtheria morbidity rate diminished, but it is still high, especially in Gomel'skaya and Mogilevskaya oblasts. A study of the problem showed that the high incidence of diphtheria is a consequence of serious gaps in the organization and conduct of preventive inoculations. The goal has been set for the elimination of diphtheria in the city of Minsk in 1961, in Vitebskaya and Grodnenskaya oblasts in 1962, and in Gomel'skaya, Mogilevskaya, Minskaya, and Brestskaya oblasts in 1963. In order to achieve this goal, the level and quality of all preventive work must be drastically raised and an immunity to diphtheria infection established among the childhood population.

For the purpose of hastening the work on the immunoprophylaxis of diphtheria, the Ministry of Health USSR by decree introduced additional card file clerk-nurse positions in all children's consultation offices serving 5000 or more children and fel'dsher positions in all rayon hospitals; included in the duries of fel'dshers is the organizing of preventive inoculations in the rayon and controling the quality of their execution.

Extensive testing of the presence of immunity in children by means of the Schick allergy test is necessary. Medical institutions of the republic will be fully supplied with Schick toxin, the manufacture of which has been mastered by the Scientific Research Institute of Microbiology, Epidemiology, and Hygiene of the Ministry of Health BSSR. The use of the Schick test will make it possible to detect all older children not immune to diphtheria.

Work in the diagnosis and treatment of diphtheria and the detection and treatment of bacilli carriers must be drastically improved. Suspected diphtheria cases must be hospitalized in specially segregated wards or departments in all contagious disease infirmaries of the republic. Every case of diphtheria incidence should be discussed at rayon or city conferences of medical workers and at meetings in medical institutions, and each case of death from diphtheria should become a subject of study and discussion in oblast departments of health.

Elimination of poliomyelitis. With the acquisition of an attenuated highly effective live vaccine the elimination of poliomyelitis has become a current topic. In 1959 the fight against poliomyelitis with the use of this vaccine was extensively waged in cities of the BSSR. Over 500,000 children under 14 received two injections. This brought about a reduction in polio-morbidity of more than 300 percent in 1959 over 1958. To eliminate polio, it is necessary to inoculate 3,000,000 individuals up to 20 years of age with mono-,di-, and trivaccine in March, April, and May 1960. The mass inoculation of the population against polio with live vaccine will make it possible not only to create immunity in individuals susceptible to polio but will also reduce the concentration of the polio virus in the environment, a fact which, together with the execution of public sanitation measures, will constitute the most important factor in the elimination of polio.

Elimination of tularemia. Measures are being taken along two directions: extermination of the carriers of infection -- rodents -- and the conducting of preventive inoculations. Agricultural organs and local executive committees.

have been assigned the task of organizing special groups in 1960-1961 for destroying rodents in localities with natural focal centers of tularemia, at the behest of the oblast departments of health. Public health organs must soon organize anti-tularemia inoculations in unfavorable or threatened regions as far as tularemia is concerned. Approximately 1,000,000 persons are subject to vaccination and 500,000, to revaccination. Simultaneously it is planned to create an immunity belt in 19 regions /or rayons?/ of the Poles'ye with latent natural focal centers of infection, where approximately 700,000 persons live. In addition, individuals who had been inoculated five years previously should be revaccinated annually, and the vaccination of the entire population living in this region of the Poles'ye lowlands, where in 1959-1960 the diffuse epizooty of tularemia among mouse-like rodents was established, must be completed.

Elimination of trachoma. In 1952 eighty-five percent of the population of the republic was examined for the detection of trachoma contractors. Since that time a number of measures have been effected for the elimination of trachoma: supplying regions where trachoma exists with oculists; special training for medium-level rural medical personnel; semi-annual examinations of all school-children, inmates of children's homes, children in nurseries and kindergartens, and youths of 15 to 18 for trachoma; wxamination of the entire population of populated points where trachoma focal centers exist; examination of cured persons for the detection of relapses. and treatment of patients in hospitals until complete recovery. All this made possible the reduction of the trachoma morbidity rate to solitary cases, and in Grodnenskaya and Brestskaya oblasts trachoma was completely obliterated. The goal is to effect the complete elimination of trachoma throughout the republic by the end of 1960.

Elimination of rabies. The undertaking of a complex of measures to control rabies -- the extermination of vagrant dogs and the registration, vaccination, and quarantining of animals suspected of contraction of rabies -- evolved upon organs of the Ministry of Agriculture. The task of medical workers is to acquaint the populace with sources of infection and paths of the spread of rabies and to organize efficiently the execution of antirabies injections. In many regions the performance of the latter was turned over to medium-level medical personnel of fel'dsher-obstetrical stations. The improper prescription and performance of antirabies injections leads to serious complications. Urgent regulation of antirabies activities is needed. It is necessary to set up Pasteurization points in cities and rayon centers, provide them

appropriate quarters and equipment, and staff them with well-trained physicians. The prescription and performance of inoculations must take place only at these points. In order to prevent post vaccination complications and to increase the effectiveness of antirabies inoculations, individuals under harsh labor conditions or with diseases of the nervous system or other organs should be asmitted to hospitals for the administration of antirabies injections.

Complete elimination of syphilis. Incidence of active forms of syphilis is recorded in solitary cases. The problem of completely and finally eliminating active forms of syphilis must be solved by workers of dermato-venerealogical institutions with the active assistance of medical workers of the public system.

In order to effect a sharp reduction in other infectious diseases, the efforts of all medical workers must be directed to the conducting of sanitary improvement measures in populated localities.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia and the Council of Ministers BSSR anticipates the construction in 1960, by the efforts of kolkhozes, sovkhozes, and local soviets, of 20,500 wells, that is, an average of 120-170 wells per rayon. In households and public places where toilet facilities and sewage tanks do not meet sanitary requirements, they are to be built. Executive committees of local soviets have devised measures for improving the sanitary condition of rural communities. Oblast contests for the hygienically best farmsteads and populated localities have been announced, and monetary prizes and other means of encouragement have been assigned. The Grodnenskaya Oblast executive committee, for example, has established the following 98 monetary prizes: nine for kolkhozes and sovkhozes, nine for rural communities and street committees, and 80 for households, the Mogilevskaya Oblast executive committee -- three transferable Red Banners with monetary prizes; and the Minskaya Oblast executive committee -- nine monetary prizes for rural communities and collectives. Every year since 1956 contests for city improvement have been conducted in the republic.

Leaders of public health organs and institutions and the medical community of the republic must bring up subjects concerning the improvement of populated localities at meetings of kolkhoz members and workers and serve as active organizers of the masses in bringing sanitary measures into reality.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of the public in the tasks of raising sanitary standards in the home and at work. Without the participation of the population the success-

ful control of contagious diseases is impossible. Health education must be radically improved. It should be distinguished by a militancy and a close connection with reality and be reinforced by the participation of the population in improving the hygienic conditions of labor and daily life. Daily painstaking work in the health education of the population, primarily the schoolchildren, must be laid on a foundation of sanitary enlightenment. The best means of health education is the personal example of medical workers and teachers.

A large role in the mobilization of the broad masses of the population for the work in putting sanitary order in urban and rural areas of the republic are to be played by public councils at medical institutions consisting of medical workers, representatives of party, Komsomol, trade union, and economic organizations, and the public. Such councils are to be formed everywhere during the first half of 1960.

Of greatest significance in the elimination and drastic reduction of contagious diseases are medical measures, especially immuno-prophylaxis, the hospitalization not only of infected patients but also of those suspected of a contagious disease, and the thorough disinfection treatment of local centers.

Medical workers are performing considerable work from year to year in the immunization of the public. Some 3½ to 4 million inoculations against smallpox, diphtheria, polio, tyhoid fever, tuberculosis, whooping cough, tularemia, and other contagious diseases are given annually in the republic. However, in the setup of this work there are substantial deficiences. No records of inoculations have yet been imposed. At many medical institutions no index file has yet been instituted, and the recording of inoculations is being done incompletely and inefficiently. Facts have been revealed where children to whom inoculations were not given were adjudged inoculated "according to recorded data." As a result of improper storage of bacterial preparations (at a temperature above +4°) injections are sometimes performed with unfit preparations although the period of their effectiveness has not expired. Work with vaccinators and patronage /?/ nurses is weakly performed. Instructions concerning the performing of inoculations are not complied with, and inoculations that have been started are not carried out to the end.

A close check-up of inoculated groups revealed the existence of a certain number of older children incompletely inoculated or not inoculated at all. Instead of a ratio of 1:3 between anti-diphtheria vaccinations and revaccinations, it was 1;1.8 throughout the republic as a whole in 1958 and 1:2.2 in 1959. A similar situation prevails with respect to

inoculations against tuberculosis, smallpox, and whooping cough. It is a known fact that inoculations with a combined whooping cough-diphtheria vaccine are more effective with respect to both diphtheria and whooping cough than inoculations made with monovaccines; however, only four percent of all vaccinated individuals are inoculated with whooping cough-diphtheria vaccine in the republic.

Life urgently demands the elimination of defects in the organizing of inoculation matters. This, in our opinion, will be facilitated by discontinuing the planning of inoculations against smallpox, diphtheria, whooping cough, and tuberculosis. All children should be inoculated against these diseases within fixed periods, without any plans. The establishment of inoculation offices at children's city polyclinics and children's departments of hospitals would also help to raise the quality of immuno-prophylaxis.

A necessary condition of success in the control of contagious diseases is the total hospitalization of those who have, or are suspected of having, contracted contagious diseases. For this purpose beds in contagious disease hospitals have been set up in the republic. However, far from all contagious disease patients are hospitalized, especially during epidemic outbreaks. For total hospitalization it is necessary to establish reserves of temporary hospital beds in every oblast, city, and rayon. Another necessity is to earmark transportation for the hospitalization of contagious disease patients, for it is impossible to control contagious diseases successfully if patients are delivered to the contagious disease hospitals by random transportation.

During recent years sanitary epidemiological institutions of the republic have been considerably equipped with modern disinfection apparatus. There are 722 vapor and vapor-formalin disinfection chambers in the republic, including 106 self-propelled. Present disinfection equipment must be used economically and carefully; it should not be allowed to stand idle or to be used for unintended purposes. On the model of Gomel'skaya Oblast, workshops for the repair of disinfection apparatus will be organized this year at every oblast sanitary-epidemiological station.

The solution of the problems posed is impossible without an increase in the level of organization work. Sanitary-epidemiological stations have been called upon to play a very important role in the organization of sanitary-antiepidemic work.

In the republic there are 140 sanitary stations and sanitary epidemiological departments of hospitals, where 685 physicians and 3500 medium-level medical personnel are serving.

All the sanitary epidemiological stations have sanitary-bacteriological laboratories. However, not all the sanitary epidemiological stations work under suitable conditions. The laboratories do not possess sufficient thermostats, centrifuges, measuring vessels, reagents, and other equipment. During 1960 the sanitary bacteriological laboratories must be equipped with everything necessary.

Especially acute is the need for staffing sanitary epidemiological stations and departments with physician personnel and to raise their skills. A hundred physiciand from among graduates of medical institutes will be directed this year into sanitary anti-epidemic work. The daily training of sanitary anti-epidemic station and department of physicians should be combined with their planned dispatch to courses in Belorussian and central institutes for the advanced training of physicians and to ocupations in scientific research institutes in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Khar'kov.

It is impossible to count upon success in work without raising the skills of district pediatrists, internists, and rural district physicians in the early diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of contagious diseases. The methodical guidance of this work in the oblasts of the republic has been entrusted to the contagious disease hospitals of oblast centers. The instruction of district physicians at advanced training courses must be combined with daily study at "interrupted" courses according to the program approved by the Ministry of Health BSSR in February 1960.

Visual methods of teaching are the most efficient. For that reason leaders of public health organs and scientists will in the next few months work on the devising of measures on a city and rayon scale for the elimination of diphtheria, polio, and tularemia and the sharp reduction of acute intestinal infections, ascariasis, tuberculosis, and typhus, with the end that these measures may serve as a model for all cities and rayons of the republic.

A large role in the conduct of antiepidemic and health improvement measures is the property of scientific research and medical institutes of the republic. In 1960 scientists of institutes will work on the following problems: scientific principles of vaccine-serum matters; acute childhood infections; viruses and virus diseases; intestinal infections; epidemic polio; general laws of the infection and epidemiological process and principles of the elimination of infectious diseases; basic parasitic diseases, their prevention and treatment, tuberculosis; natural focus of diseases, etc.

Participation in the solving of the problem of the elimination of some and the drastic reduction of other contagious diseases is the honored duty of all medical workers of the republic.

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