

OVERSEAS STUDY

During the year, the Deputy Director visited Australia, where he studied the dental services conducted by the various States, visited the Dental Schools, and attended the Seventh Australian Dental Congress in Perth.

THE PREVENTIVE APPROACH TO THE DENTAL PROBLEM

The last annual report of the Dental Division concluded by saying that it was the aim of the Department to attempt to reduce the high incidence of dental decay in New Zealand by applying the knowledge and methods that scientific research makes available. In the present state of knowledge, the most fruitful results in this direction can be expected from the painting of children's teeth with sodium fluoride solution. This form of preventive treatment originated in the United States, where it was found to result in a 40-per-cent. reduction in dental decay, and it is now being widely used both in public dental services and by private dentists. Promising results have been obtained by the Dental Division under New Zealand conditions in an experimental study with adequate controls, and, as a result, steps are now being taken to introduce this form of preventive treatment in the School Dental Service.

INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE DIVISION

The year 1948 was the first complete year during which the Division has operated. It is now easier to see how the work may take shape.

STAFF

In addition to the Director, it was agreed by Cabinet during 1947 that there should be one District Industrial Medical Officer in each of the four main centres. During 1948 these appointments have been made.

Each of these medical officers will have on his staff two trained industrial nurses, in addition to his clerical assistant. Industrial nurses so far appointed, besides the two appointed in Wellington in 1947, are one in the Christchurch area and one in the Auckland area. Both these nurses completed the post-graduate course in industrial hygiene in 1948. Nurses now being trained will in due course fill the vacancies in the other areas.

In addition to the whole-time staff, one or more general practitioners have been appointed as Certifying Factory Medical Officers in each district to carry out the medical examination of juveniles required by the Factories Act. It is highly desirable in the future that the permanent staff should be able to mobilize other part-time trained staff to assist with the work, both from the ranks of general practitioners and nurses and from such organizations as the St. John Ambulance (New Zealand) and the New Zealand Red Cross Society.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

The term "industrial hygiene" perhaps fails to convey a broad enough concept of what should be the scope of the work. The Division is concerned with any aspect of health that may be directly related to occupation, and "occupational health," therefore, is perhaps a better term than "industrial hygiene." While work in factories and mines in relation to health has attracted more attention than occupational health problems elsewhere, these do exist in all manner of spheres and should very properly be the concern of the Division. The fact that general practitioners die from coronary thrombosis far more commonly than any other group of workers presents a very nice occupational health problem, for example. Nevertheless, the bulk of the work must be among industrial workers and, to start with at least, in factories. For that reason it is very