

APPENDIX IV.—LABORATORY REPORTS.

PART A.—PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY REPORT.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the work of the Bacteriological and Vaccine Laboratories:—

At the end of last year I made the recommendation that a small fee should be charged for the examination of pathological specimens other than those bearing directly on public-health questions. My suggestion was made with a view to excluding, if possible, from the demands made on us all such simple examinations as could well be done by any medical practitioner, since the number of these was increasing to such an extent as to occupy an unfair share of the time of myself and my assistants. This recommendation was approved by the Hon. the Minister of Public Health, and came into force on the 1st June, 1908. It was decided to charge an all-round fee of 10s., except for such examinations as sputa for tubercle bacilli, blood for typhoid reaction, and throat-swabs for diphtheria. These, being matters of some public interest, are still examined free of charge. A remission of the fee is also made in the case of specimens from public hospitals, and where the medical practitioner certifies in a private case that the patient is without the means to pay. The benefits of the laboratory are thus still within the reach of every one.

The results this year have, I think, justified the imposition of the small charge, for the medical profession have continued to submit specimens very nearly to the same extent as last year, the total examinations made being 1,291, as against 1,439 in 1908. In the accompanying table it will be seen that the infectious-diseases groups—such as tubercular sputa, typhoidal bloods, and diphtheritic swabs—remain much as before, the principal reductions being in the examination of solid tissues and the chemical examination of urines. The smaller numbers in the latter class must be regarded with entire satisfaction, as it especially applies to the simpler chemical tests, which certainly should not be passed on to a public laboratory. The reduction in examinations of solid tissues is not so much to be desired; but during the later months of the year the number of these, which had been greatly reduced when first the charge was made, rose again to the original, or even larger, proportions. The drop was no doubt due to the fact that many practitioners did not at first understand the position, for all to whom I have spoken have expressed themselves entirely satisfied that a fee should be paid. Indeed, some who previously hesitated to take advantage of what appeared to them almost as a public charity have since sent in specimens for examination.

It is very satisfactory to find that the charge made has had so little effect, indicating as it does that our work is regarded by the medical profession as of real value to them. The credit of having thus obtained the confidence of these medical men must rest with Mr. Hurley, whose reputation for accurate and painstaking work is now thoroughly established.

TABLE SHOWING RESULTS OF EXAMINATIONS OF PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMENS.

Material.	Object of Examination.	Result.		Total.
		Positive.	Negative.	
Sputum	For tubercle	118	259	377
	" other conditions	2	5	7
	Spoiled in transit ... ..	...	...	7
Total ... ..	...	...	...	391
Total for 1908 ... ..	...	...	...	401
Purulent and other discharges—				
Pus	For gonococcus	18	26	44
	" pyogenic organisms	11	2	13
	" tubercle bacilli	1	8	9
	" other conditions	9	1	10
Pleuritic fluid	" tubercle ... ..	...	3	3
	" other conditions... ..	2	...	2
Other discharges	" diphtheria ... ..	...	2	2
	Spoiled in transit ... ..	...	...	4
Total ... ..	...	...	...	87
Total for 1908 ... ..	...	...	...	72