

Thirteen private hospitals have closed down. Ten new licenses were issued. Four licensees have had their licenses transferred to new and improved premises. Two private hospitals have changed hands. One license has been revoked consequent upon the licensee having had her name removed from the Midwives Register.

On the whole, the conduct and staffing of the private hospitals in this district shows signs of improvement. Qualified nurses are being employed more, and there is less need for the granting of concessions under the Act with regard to licensees and resident managers.

Reports that illicit private hospitals are being conducted are continually being dealt with, and many houses have been visited and searched in view of this. On only one occasion was there available evidence sufficient to convict, and the offender was on that occasion fined only £2, and cautioned by the Magistrate.

MIDWIVES.

The inspection of the midwives has not been as thorough this year as is desirable, although most of the registered midwives in the country districts have been visited and their kits examined.

Warnings have been sent to many unregistered women who were known to be illicitly practising as midwives, there not being sufficient evidence available to convict in the event of the prosecution of these. From the number of inquiries received it would seem that the public are becoming more anxious for better midwifery and nursing attention, and more dubious of the ministrations of the unqualified woman. There is no doubt that the district nurses and subsidized midwives appointed by the Hospital Boards and the emergency services of the Native District Nurses have provided much improvement in nursing facilities for the country districts.

The Bay of Islands Board has three subsidized midwives in different parts of its district. The Whangarei Board, the Kaipara Board, and the Auckland Board have each got one; while the Waikato Board salaries in full two trained midwives in its district. Many more such nurses and midwives are still required.

Two midwives have been removed from the register in this district, one for a serious breach of the regulations, and one for having been convicted under the Tohungas Act and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The District Health Officer, Wellington, reports:—

Inquiries were made into two fatal cases of puerperal septicæmia, both of whom had been attended by the same midwife. As a result, legal proceedings are being taken.

The District Health Officer, Christchurch, reports:—

One private hospital was closed for a few days for disinfection after a case of puerperal septicæmia which had died on the premises.

In other puerperal cases reported, the midwives attending were temporarily suspended pending disinfection.

(14.) THE SALE OF FOOD AND DRUGS ACT.

The District Health Officer, Auckland, reports:—

The regulations in regard to labelling are for the most part being strictly carried out by the manufacturers. Some lines of goods have caused a great deal of correspondence, notably aerated waters and cordials. These compounds known as "summer drinks" are for the most part made from essences in regard to which the aerated-water manufacturers have very little idea of the method of manufacture, and in many the border-line between "natural" and "artificial" is very indefinite. In regard to the articles bearing fancy names, there is often a good deal of doubt as to the correct method of describing on the label. Many lines hitherto posing as "limejuice," "cider," and so forth have now to appear labelled "artificial." Some important decisions have been made in regard to lines as to which some doubt has hitherto existed—thus, the so-called "vinegar essence," a substance made of acetic acid coloured with caramel or malt-extract, is now no longer permitted to be sold.

In order to meet the manufacturers of tomato-sauce who hold that apple is an essential flavouring, a sauce known as "tomato-chutney sauce," containing not over 10 per cent. of apple, is now allowed to be sold.

A good deal of work has resulted from an investigation into the weights of packages of tea and of butter. Over 300 samples of each have been weighed in various parts of the district. On the whole the results have been satisfactory, especially in regard to tea. With the butter packages a large number were very slightly underweight, but only to the extent of a small fraction of an ounce, and, as the total deficiency over some hundreds of samples only amounted to a few ounces, it is probable that the defect is due to imperfect methods rather than a deliberate attempt to make a profit.

A good deal of attention has been paid to ice-cream, and it was found that very many of the makers were selling as ice-cream what was merely milk and arrowroot. The trade was circularized, and later some prosecutions were undertaken.

A circular was issued to biscuit-makers in regard to the declaration of the weight of the contents of packages of biscuits. Some difficulty has been found in regard to small lines of fancy biscuits, which vary greatly in weight.

Considerable advance has been made in the direction of enforcing that part of the regulations dealing with the protection of foodstuffs from dirt and flies and vermin. In the city area the City Council authorities had passed by-laws identical with our regulations on these matters, and have undertaken a campaign on lines which have been mutually accepted. Thus the methods of dealing with the various kinds of fruit and vegetables have been decided, and already good results are in evidence. In the country districts the same methods are being followed by our Inspectors, and in most of the larger towns the fruit is now being displayed in protected cases.