HAEMOGLOBIN LEVELS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 1943 (WITH OBSERVATIONS UPON SERUM PROTEIN LEVELS)

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To those who have to undertake mass surveys involving blood examinations this report from the Medical Research Council is very welcome. It gives a standard value for haemoglobins estimated by the standard Haldane-Gowers method for men, women, pregnant women and children. It thus produces a control against which any investigation for abnormal blood changes can be compared. A similar investigation into red and white blood cells and differential counts would give a further contribution of the greatest value which this Committee could make. Any person who happens to work near a toxic substance, such as benzene, is immediately accused of being poisoned if they have a leucopenia, yet there is no information available as to how common leucopenia is in the general population.

Besides giving the valuable standard, the investigation shows that in the fourth year of war there is little anaemia in the general population. This, it implies without any good evidence, is due to the high iron content of the national loaf. The mean haemoglobin level for men was 102 per cent., there is a tendency to fall after the age of 50, but there is no great difference between the level for married and single men, and between those that do and do not eat in industrial canteens. In women, the haemoglobin is usually about 10 per cent. less than in men; the value tends to fall below the age of 50 and rise again afterwards. The reading was 2 per cent. lower in single than in married women, but there is no significant difference between married women with no pregnancies and single women. In children, the general picture is a rise from 1 up to 7, followed by a plateau of little change till 10, and then a steady rise to a maximum at 16. In London war-time day-nurseries, the incidence of anaemia in children between 2 and 5 was unduly high.

When the larger occupational groups were studied, the lowest figures were found in textile workers and locomotive and carriage workers, while the highest figures were in men in the police and Civil Service, while among women the figures were highest for housewives, the Civil Service and the W.A.A.F. The figure for the W.A.A.F. rose from 94.8 per cent. on entry to 103.1 per cent. after six months' service. It would be well for hospitals to note carefully that the figures for their employees are low on the list: 1061 nurses gave a mean of 92 per cent., while non-medical single male hospital workers gave a mean of 98.9 per cent. That the figure for nurses should be low is of the greatest importance. They are a very hard-working group of people who are very essential to the community. They live in hospitals where the supervision and understanding of diet should be the best and where blood counts can readily be obtained. These observations therefore reflect badly on our hospitals.

Serum protein estimations were made on an unselected group of 333 potential blood donors and the range of values was found to be unexpectedly wide: 5.56-7.65 g. per 100 ml. The mean of this group was lower than that of 100 Canadian soldiers serving in this country, namely 6.56 compared with 6.78. The serum protein level of the donors was probably sub-optimal, and may be related to differences in consumption of animal protein between the two groups.

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HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE, 1945-46

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This is a reference book about departments, committees and people concerned with health and social welfare; and there is undoubtedly great need for such a volume. It is divided into eleven sections, the first of 193 pages consisting of short reviews of subjects which have been topical during the past year. Of particular interest to the industrial medical officer are those on 'Rehabilitation and Resettlement' by Anne Carr, 'Care of the Eyes in Home and Factory' by Ida Mann, 'Compensation for Industrial Injury' by Hermann Levy, and 'Medical and Nursing Services in Factories' by A. G. Mcloughlin. The last of these articles gets into a short space a very complete account of existing facilities in industrial medicine. There are also interesting articles on the medical services in the Dominions. Section 2 deals with Health Legislation and Policy, and Section 3 consists of official directories of the Government Departments concerned with health, both here and in the Dominions and Colonies. Section 4 contains official statements by these bodies, while Section 5 contains unofficial statements from non-Government bodies. It is here interesting to learn that The Royal College of Physicians is drawing up a list of consultants and specialists in this country. Section 6—a very useful section—lists the composition of officially appointed committees; Section 7 discusses careers in Health and Social Welfare; Section 8 is a directory of organizations interested in these matters; Section 9 is concerned with statistics and tables; Section 10 lists books, periodicals and films; and lastly, Section 11 is entitled 'Who's Who in Health and Social Welfare.' Naturally the value of such a volume depends on its completeness and accuracy; and, unfortunately, it is on these rocks that it is wrecked. It is, for instance, extraordinary that The Lancet should be omitted from the list of medical periodicals, yet its editor is included in 'Who's Who,' whereas the British Medical Journal is listed and its editor omitted. It is difficult to understand why D.S.I.R. and M.R.C. are not discussed in the same way, while the A.R.C. is omitted completely. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of information assembled, which is not readily available elsewhere. It is, therefore, to be hoped that the book will meet with such success as will enable it next year to have sufficient man-power to make it both complete and accurate. It will then become a standard reference book for both health and social workers.

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