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EDITORIALS

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ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF LEPROSY EXPERTS BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The Second and Third World Health Assemblies, in 1949 and 1950, decided to include the subject of leprosy in the WHO program. In consequence, the Division of Epidemiological Services has undertaken to set up a consultative group of experts—or, in other terms, an expert advisory panel—with respect to that disease. Because no funds were specifically appropriated for the purpose in the budget for 1951, there is little likelihood that a committee of experts can be called to meet before 1952.

There is a difference between an "expert advisory panel" and an "expert committee." As a result of experience the Executive Board of WHO came to the conclusion that the number of experts taking part in committee meetings should be reduced.¹ It was appreciated, however, that restrictions of this nature would make it difficult to ensure appropriate representation of the various aspects of the problems which the expert committees are asked to study. This difficulty, it was believed, could be overcome by setting up advisory panels of experts to provide, by correspondence, information on progress in their special subjects; and flexibility with respect to an expert committee

¹ *Chron. World Hlth. Org.* 4 (1950) 275.

called to deal with particular phases of a given subject would be secured by selecting its members from the corresponding panel according to the agenda of each session. The Third World Health Assembly agreed provisionally to these proposals, and definitive action will be taken by the next Assembly. In the meantime, provisional regulations are in force from which are taken the following excerpts, which will make clear the present basis of such activities.

Efficiency, as well as economy, make it necessary to limit the number of experts participating in discussions on any given subject; on the other hand, it is difficult, in a small group of experts, to obtain adequate representation of the various branches of knowledge which bear upon its subject, and of the diversified forms of local experience and trends of thought prevailing in the various parts of the world.

These apparently conflicting requirements may be reconciled by giving expert committees, whenever desirable, flexible membership.

This may be done by setting up advisory panels of experts conversant with all the required branches of knowledge and forms of experience needed to cover adequately a particular subject and providing adequate geographical representation.

From these panels will be drawn the members of the expert committees, selection being made according to the agenda of each session.

1. DEFINITIONS

On the basis of the above principles:

1.1 An expert advisory panel consists of experts from whom WHO expects technical advice on a particular subject:

- (a) by correspondence;
- (b) at meetings to which they may be convened.

1.2 A member of an advisory panel is an expert, appointed by the Director-General, who undertakes to contribute by correspondence and without remuneration technical information or reports on developments within his own field, either periodically or on request from the Director-General.

1.3 An expert committee is a committee established by the World Health Assembly or the Executive Board to deal with a particular subject matter and consisting of a group of experts convened for the purpose by the Director-General.

1.4 A member of an expert committee is an expert convened to a session of that committee; he retains such status until the next session of the committee.

2. COMPETENCE AND FUNCTIONS OF EXPERT ADVISORY PANELS AND COMMITTEES

2.1 The purposes and functions of expert advisory panels and committees, in their respective technical fields and in accordance with their terms of reference, are:

2.1.1 to take stock of the latest available knowledge and expert information and make it available to WHO, i. e., its Assembly, Executive Board, committees and Director-General, and to Member States;

2.1.2 to formulate on the basis of such knowledge, technical recom-

mentations which take into account opinions and practices in different countries;

2.1.3 to make recommendations with a view to initiating, stimulating and co-ordinating research, in order to increase and supplement existing knowledge, as may be necessary for complying with the terms of reference.

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3. AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH EXPERT ADVISORY PANELS AND COMMITTEES

3.1 The World Health Assembly and the Executive Board have authority to establish and dissolve expert committees and to fix the number of their members.

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3.3 The Director-General has authority to establish expert advisory panels and to lay down their terms of reference and the duration of their office.

4. SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF EXPERT ADVISORY PANELS AND COMMITTEES

4.1 The members of expert advisory panels and committees shall be selected and appointed by the Director-General. All such appointments shall be reported to the Executive Board at its next session.

4.2 The selection of these members shall be based primarily upon their ability and technical experience. Due regard shall be paid to adequate geographical distribution.

4.3 The Director-General shall, before appointing members of an expert advisory panel, consult with the national administration concerned.

5. INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF MEMBERS

5.1 In the exercise of their functions, the members of the expert advisory panel and committees shall rank as international experts serving the Organization exclusively; as such they may not request or receive instructions from any government or authority outside the Organization.

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6. MEMBERS' TERM OF OFFICE

6.1 Members of expert advisory panels shall be appointed for such period as the Director-General may determine, but not exceeding five years.

Such period shall be terminated if and when the panel is dissolved and, in exceptional cases, at the discretion of the Director-General.

Members shall be eligible for reappointment if the panel's existence is renewed.

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14. INTERIM PROVISIONS

14.1 The above provisions shall apply as from the date of their approval by the World Health Assembly, without regard to the duration of the appointments already made on expert committees.

14.2 Expert advisory panels are hereby established in every field in which an expert committee has been established by the World Health Assembly or the Executive Board.

The World Health Organization has shown a desire to work in full harmony with the International Leprosy Association, to which it has already accorded a consultative status.

—R. CHAUSSINAND