

Paramedical Workers and Social Rehabilitation

TO THE EDITOR:

I agree that the training of paramedical workers is most important (IJL 38 (1970) 433-435). Without any doubt, paramedical workers can play a major part in leprosy control programs if they have basic knowledge of medical facts. They, however, should also know the necessary steps to be taken in cases of reaction, in case finding, maintaining of records, and the follow-up of absences. They can be of great help to the medical officer, who will work more efficiently with their help to control patients and disease. But, one should not forget that human beings need more than medicine. A human being consists of body, mind, and soul. It is fine to heal the wounds

of the body, but who takes care of the wounds of the soul? Segregation or the fear of segregation often makes the patients emotional. They lose their confidence in society and themselves because of the fear of leaving their families and jobs as soon as their disease is known. Therefore, we need workers who know how to tackle these problems of the patients also.

- (a) Economics and rehabilitation: we are not able to help a patient unless he is reestablished in a sound economic position. Normally, as soon as it is known that a person is suffering from leprosy, he is thrown out of his job.

- (b) Physical rehabilitation is the medical part of physiotherapy which improves the patient's physical condition. Through plastic surgery it is medically possible to remedy face deformity to a very high degree and to mend other minor as well as major deformities, so that the patient can mix with others without fear.
- (c) Social adjustment: through this aspect of rehabilitation the patient is helped to enjoy the same status as other individuals. He wishes that his children may attend school without the stigma that his parents carried.
- (d) Psychological problems: leprosy patients have emotional problems often more serious than those of others. They feel that they are being watched with hatred all the time. They are not sure of other people and of their welcome.

Help for these problems is often limited. There is a need to give enough knowledge to the paramedical worker to deal with the whole person. This may bring a lot of problems in the beginning due to a lack of understanding, but it is certainly worth trying. It is very difficult to get people who really try to understand the problems of the patients and try to win their confidence.

I have tried this for some years in Karachi, Pakistan, and it brought much blessing to the leprosy patients there. For example, interest free loans were given to patients to start businesses or to build shelters and financial support was granted for the education of leprosy patients and their children.

Numbers of loans and their purposes.

| Purpose: | Nos. in 1969 | Nos. in 1963-1969 |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| House | 17 | 99 |
| Hut | 8 | 127 |
| Shop | 30 | 202 |
| Hawking | 22 | 196 |
| Sewing machine | 3 | 39 |
| Handloom | — | 13 |
| Skilled trade | 9 | 53 |
| Other business | 3 | 91 |
| Social help | 18 | 88 |
| Totals | 110 | 908 |

Accordingly, social workers' work should be:

- Case work: to know the histories of the patients and to keep their records.
- Home visit to become familiar with the economic status of their patients.
- Interviews with patients and their family members. An important question is whether the children go to school or not. The best way to build a nation is to help children attend school.
- Health education of the patients and public.

Rehabilitation of the patient in the society is not alone a problem of rehabilitating the patient. It is also the problem of rehabilitating society to the patient.

I. K. GILL, M.D.

5024 Pulheim
Beethovenstrasse 4
West Germany

Educational Assistance.

| Type of education: | Primary | Secondary | College | Training | Others | Total |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|--------|-------|
| Nos. of students | | | | | | |
| 1968 | 155 | 82 | 23 | 5 | 4 | 269 |
| 1969 | 194 | 95 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 310 |