

The "Home" of Independence

by Rehane Repond

NOTHING in the big, sunny and cheerful house with its 40 unruly boys and two monitors scarcely older than the eldest of their charges suggests that it is an institution for young diabetes sufferers. In the happy atmosphere of this home at Hinrichsseggen, Bavaria, it is difficult to believe that these lads are afflicted with an incurable disease. Yet they themselves are perfectly aware of it and know that they are there to learn how to live with the disease and how to treat themselves while attending school and leading as active and normal lives as possible.

The Hinrichsseggen home was first started as a holiday camp but soon became a permanent institution for three different kinds of patients—those from big families where a special diet was difficult to manage, those who were unusually backward at school and those in whom the disease is liable to rapid fluctuations and requires constant medical supervision. The boys, whose ages go from 8 to 18, remain at the home for several years.

Some children are seriously undergrown when they first arrive—perhaps as much as 15 cm (6 ins) below normal height—but with proper care they quickly gain weight and vitality.

The heart and soul of the place is Dr. Walter Hertzog. When he opens the door of his office at six o'clock each morning, his first patients of the day are waiting. They are big lads who are apprenticed at the textile mill in the village. At seven it is the turn of the schoolboys.

Each boy's file lies open on the doctor's desk for him to look at whenever he wishes. He knows the meaning of the results of any tests he has had, and can check what dose of insulin is prescribed. What

is even more interesting, he can guess whether he will be allowed something extra—a slice of bread perhaps—not included in his diet schedule. Diabetics are always hungry but must always be extremely careful what they eat.

The children learn all this very quickly. Each evening after supper the doctor announces, for each child in turn, the results of the day's examinations and the dose of insulin he should give himself the next day. If the doctor finds a too-high sugar level, he makes an example of the child by questioning him in front of everybody. He always discovers that the diet has not been strictly followed—the child has eaten a chocolate someone gave him, or had an ice-cream during recreation. The doctor always patiently repeats the same lesson and once again goes over the principles of diet that diabetics must observe strictly.

No sweets

It is a great hardship for children to be permanently forbidden sweets and puddings, but they must get over their longings and accustom themselves to doing without so that they may live otherwise normal lives in the future. The boys know this very well.

Some of them have been diabetic from the age of three and have had their three injections a day ever since. They have learnt to know their disease, to recognize the symptoms of a crisis and to take the necessary precautions. Other boys may have to be watched until they also have learnt the signs scating, going pale, feeling tired—and to eat the lump of sugar that straightaway counteracts them.

Diabetes in children is "brittle" and may suddenly get worse. The boys are, therefore, woken up briefly at midnight to make sure that their sleep is normal and does not conceal the onset of coma.

The young diabetes sufferer has a tough time, but at Hinrichsseggen he goes through this severe apprenticeship under almost ideal conditions, learning to be responsible for his own treatment and to live an independent life. The doctor and the medical team help in this process of education and quickly gain the child's full confidence. This constant contact and mutual understanding between boy and doctor ensures that the treatment is effective and leads the boy towards a full and normal life.

Thanks to institutions like that of Hinrichsseggen, young diabetes sufferers can enjoy liberty, independence and friendship with their fellows, and become well equipped to face their future.

(Courtesy : WHO)

WORLD HEALTH DAY

7 April 1971

What is World Health Day ?

World Health Day marks the anniversary of the coming into force of the Constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Each year a special theme, of importance to a large number of countries is chosen. The theme for this year (1971) is: "A Full Life Despite Diabetes."

The April issue of the *Nursing Journal* which carries special articles on the theme is devoted to World Health Day. The observance of the day by the TNAI is usually organised by the State Branches of the Association.

Nursing Laws

The USAID has brought out a publication "Inventory of Indian Laws and Regulations affecting Rights and Responsibilities of Nurses based on Statutory Sources."

Three copies each have been sent to all Schools of Nursing. Further copies can be had from the Nurse Consultant, USAID, American Embassy, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi.

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