

Social Workers and Public Health Nurses

Paper read at the I.C.N. Congress, Atlantic City.

By

Miss Gudrun Arentz. Norway.

The work of public health and its construction is to a great extent dependent on the geographical position of the country concerned. In order to throw some light on the tasks and duties with which a public health nurse in Norway is faced allow me to introduce my country to you.

Norway has a population of approximately three millions, of which approximately 900,000 live in towns and 2 millions in country districts.

These districts are thinly populated in some areas such as in the north of Norway and in the narrows fjords on the west coast.

The distance is great between the farms, the districts are elongated and rather difficult as far as transportation is concerned, and very often the communications are exceedingly bad and weather conditions can also at times create hindrance in the work.

In 1860 Norway gained its own Public Health Law. This law, except where vaccination is concerned, deals with preventive work for the first time.

It was the women in our country who first commenced the public health work in our country systematically.

In 1895 they formed an Association, Norwegian Women's Public Health Association, and after 50 years is the largest humanitarian organisation of women in the country with approximately 190,000 members distributed in well over one thousand local clubs all over the country.

From its beginning the Association has had training schools for nurses, for the purpose of doing public health work, especially in the field of tuberculosis.

Another private organisation, The National Tuberculosis Association, (founded in 1910) has also its own training school for nurses. The nurses from this organisation are doing public health work chiefly in rural districts. Up to the present time, it is therefore the private organisations who have done the public health work in Norway, but the State now looks upon it as their great commission in order to establish all public health work under one community interest.

The common diseases among the people of Norway are Tuberculosis, Cancer and Rheumatism.

In the year of 1900 a law came into force making Tuberculosis a reportable disease. At this time an energetic and systematic struggle was conducted to fight this disease.

All our school children in Norway have the Pirquet test and one can also rely on the fact that most children with a negative reaction are vaccinated with B.C.G. vaccine. To date this vaccination has been voluntary but a law is now being prepared and probably will come into force this autumn, terminating the automatic vaccination of children with B.C.G. vaccine before leaving the board-school, which at the present time is compulsory. It is required of all the citizens to have routine examinations as well as a radiograph of the chest. This being accomplished, we hope within a short time to control this disease.