

SECTION 14- VENEREAL DISEASE

Venerel Disease still accounts for a great amount of invalidism. In Europe large numbers of Officers and men were suffering from Venereal Disease and 400 were similarly invalided in Egypt. I am not able to furnish reliable figures for Europe as they were not available owing to a new system, known as early treatment, having been introduced under which V.D. cases was not officially classed as Venereal Disease.

At the Australian Dermatological Hospital, Balford, there were 1100 patients suffering from Gonorrhoea and at Parkhouse Camp 350 were being treated for Syphilis. In addition many men were being given "early treatment" in London and elsewhere and not reported as suffering from Venereal Disease. Attached are reports on Hospital at Balford and Parkhouse Camp.

In France the majority of cases were in a large Imperial Hospital at Havre, to which Australians are sent. Fifty beds had recently been established at each of the three A.I.F. Casualty Clearing Stations for early treatment. Report on visits to Hospitals at Havre and at Staples and is attached.

A cable was received from Defence on the question of providing an Australian Hospital for treatment of V.D. in France - viz:-

"W.S.20

19th June, 1918.

Please enquire and report on desirability of providing an Australian Hospital for treatment of Venereal Disease our troops in France"

which was replied to in the following terms:-

"V.D. Hospitals France - Have visited Imperial Hospitals Havre and Staples where Australian patients treated (stop) Both quite satisfactory (stop) Four Australian Medical Officers working former, two latter (stop) No complaints patients re treatment (stop) Many Australians interviewed (stop) They suffer disability re pay as compared Imperial patients (stop) Consider Australian Hospital would be advantageous but difficulty getting suitable building (stop) Subject already being considered by A.I.F. Authorities (stop) System known early treatment working with good effect (stop) Allow many cases remain near front"

The D.M.S., A.I.F., had been trying for some time before a visit to have Australians in France who were not cured within a short period, sent to England to be treated at Balford, but the Imperial Authorities objected to any men being sent to England with

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Venereal Disease for fear such action would offer an inducement to men to contract the disease. Four Australian Medical Officers were attached to the Havre Venereal Hospital and two to that at Etaples. The subject of the cable from Defense was still being considered when I left.

The O.C. Hospital at Havre and some of the men spoke to me about the system in the Australian Forces of stopping all pay whilst under treatment and at the same time showed the hopeless financial position of men with chronic conditions. They had no hope whatever of ever being able to receive any pay for years and therefore lost all wish to get well and return to fight.

The system in force in the Imperial Army was that 7d. per day was deducted from the pay of British Soldiers, roughly one-third of their pay, and for Officers a deduction of 2s. 6d per day was made. On the other hand, Australians whilst under treatment for Venereal Disease received no pay. At Salisbury this rule was not being enforced. In the case of Syphilis as soon as the chancre was healed the patient was put on light duty and on full pay. On an average a syphilitic only lost one week's pay, often less. Gonorrhoea cases were ^{not} put on light duty and so lost all pay

I made representations to the G.O.C., A.I.F., on the subject of pay and as a result the authority for two-thirds pay similar to that in Australia which had previously been refused by G.O.C., A.I.F., was brought into effect.

I have alluded to what was termed "early treatment". In order to encourage men to report early when treatment of Gonorrhoea is likely to be quickly successful, an arrangement was made in London and at all A.I.F. Camps and units in England, to give very intense treatment to the cases of Gonorrhoea in the early stages, and for eight days they were not officially reported as Gonorrhoea, being allowed, if in London, to live and go where they wished. If treatment was successful and the case was cured within eight days,

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the man was simply discharged as in the case of other diseases and no record was entered in his pay book. If the treatment was not successful within eight days he was sent to Bulford for treatment and came under the regulation re stoppage of pay and other disabilities.

Early treatment was successful in a great number of cases and many were aborted. An effort to introduce this system in France has been tried but had not been working long enough to make any deductions from it. It was not being practised in Egypt as particulars had not been passed to the A.I.F. there.

One of the effects of early treatment was that soldiers working in London were placed in a very much more favourable position than those in France or elsewhere.

In all Camps where A.I.F. troops are quartered and in all units a very complete system of ablution rooms, or preventative tents, has been established. Men were told where these rooms or tents were situated and advised to use them as soon as possible after exposure to infection. Were it not for these rooms or tents far greater numbers would be suffering than at present.

Preventative treatment is effective in a large percentage of cases who applied for treatment within a reasonable period (8 hours) after exposure to infection and few cases are reported from amongst those who have used the preventative measures.

The figures for the Rest Camp at Port Said are given as showing what can be done by the zealous work of the medical authorities.

The Rest Camp - situated in Port Said close to the native quarter. There are practically no restrictions to men going about as they like and where they wish, provided they return by certain hours at night and in other ways behave themselves. During the eight months preceding June 1918 (for which figures were available) 16,000 men had passed through the camp for rest and change, each having roughly 10 days' holiday. 10,000 attended at the Preventative Tent and received ablution and treatment. Of

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the 10,000 only 22 developed Venereal Disease. This alone is a wonderfully small percentage, but when analysed it is found that of the 22, five were undoubtedly treated within eight hours of exposure to infection and so in their cases the treatment failed. With the other 17 there was a doubt as to the treatment having been given within the prescribed time, several being men who took the risk of infection at night and did not seek treatment until the next morning.

Whilst these good results were being obtained at Port Said, the members of the Force on duty in Palestine were being sent in large numbers to the Venereal Hospital. Many preventative rooms were made available in Palestine, but the men usually contracted the disease when away from these places and could not attend for ablution.

Attached is copy of report on the work of the Venereal Section engaged in the Treatment of Venereal Disease amongst the Australian and New Zealand Troops in Egypt and Palestine - 1.6.17 to 31.5.18.

Men on leave all over the United Kingdom are not able to attend for preventative treatment and Great Britain does nothing to prevent them from contracting the disease, in fact at the time of my visit to India orders were issued absolutely prohibiting anything being done and insisting upon all voluntary efforts in this direction (then being practised without authority in India) being discontinued. The result in one station which I visited was that the incidence of Venereal Disease had in four weeks been increased by over 200 per cent.

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REPORTS on No. 1 Austn. Dermatological Hospital, BULFORD
and on PARKHOUSE CAMP, SALISBURY PLAINS

No. 1 Austn. Dermatological Hospital, BULFORD - O.C. - Colonel
J.M.Y. Stewart, D.S.O., V.D., A.M.C., A.I.F.

Staff 15 Medical Officers, 180 other ranks, no Nurses.

This Hospital is entirely for patients actually suffering from Venereal Disease, and these patients whilst in Hospital have stoppage of their pay. Scabies are also treated here. Syphilis Gonorrhoea and Scabies are segregated as regards wards, messing, etc. As it works out a man with Syphilis is only in Hospital on an average less than 8 days and he loses his pay; he is then transferred to Parkhouse Venereal Training Camp and stoppage ceases. A man with Gonorrhoea is in Bulford Hospital on an average 40 days and he loses his pay for this period. On the other hand he does not lose his pay whilst he is undergoing early treatment at any of the Early Treatment Depots; and the rule is that if the disease is not cured within eight days he must be transferred to Bulford Hospital. As a matter of fact some at least of the cases in Early Treatment Depots remain longer than 8 days if they are practically cured, or as at Weymouth where Venereal cases are only sent to Bulford twice a week, but the general rule seems to be that if a man undergoing early treatment at any stage of the disease is quite definitely a case of Gonorrhoea, he is transferred to Bulford right away.

There is a Guard Room where Venereal cases under detention are kept and treated. This part of the Hospital is not under the O.C. and was very dirty, especially the bath rooms and latrines.

Hospital Wards- for serious cases are good. Wards contain 40 beds, but to get to the wards one passes through the main passage off which the W.C's, bathrooms, and pantries are situated. This is the only inlet to the wards.

Whilst in Bulford patients do no training at all.

There is a separate annexe of the Hospital kept for Officers. Some in wards, some in small cubicles, and here the same arrangements as regards segregation are carried out as described above.

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Reports On No. 1 A.D.H., BULFORD and on PARKHOUSE CAMP (Contd)

Bulford generally was depressing as a Hospital.

The O.C. stated that the segregation of the patients was quite absolute as regards the messing and sleeping, but they mix in the grounds together.

The actual Venereal treatment here is under Lt-Colonel W.E. Grigor, O.B.E., A.M.C., A.I.F., who is a Venereal Specialist.

PARKHOUSE CAMP - Here is an A.M.C. Training Camp, Convalescent Training Camp (for Venereals), also A.S.C. Camp.

A.M.C. Training Camp - Really corresponds to Overseas Training Brigade for A.M.C. Details and Training Battalion for A.M.C. - about 470 in camp - mostly from Australia but also men from Command Depots.

Men here have stretcher drill, A.M.C. Training, First Aid, Application of Thomas Splints, Gas Mask Drill, etc. "A" Class men are here trained as stretcher bearers, are given Bayonet Drill, Marketry, etc., and physical exercises graduated according to instructions of Medical Officer, and all men sent from here overseas must be fit for Field Service. "B" Class men for Hospitals in France and the Base are supplied from Units in France.

There are about 50 acres under cultivation by men training. O.C. and N.C.O's are permanent, all the rest of the staff is casual and constantly changing, as part of this camp is the Convalescent Training Depot for patients discharged from Bulford as non-infectious but still under treatment, and able to do a certain amount of training whilst finishing their medical treatment. They receive full pay whilst here.

Accommodation - for men as in other camps.

Cookhouses - Accommodation for 1,000. All food is utilised and there is no waste.

The Camp is under guard and there is a wire fence all round so that it is really a detention camp.

There is a Hospital ward where sick cases (after .606 or other illnesses) are treated, but no nurses.

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REPORT on Visit to HOSPITALS at HAVRE and at STAPLES, FRANCE.

19TH GENERAL HOSPITAL - to the NORTH of HAVRE - This is a British R.A.M.C. Unit and is entirely for Venereal and skin cases.

Accommodation for 2,500 cases including 400 skin cases.

At present 37 Officers and 700 other ranks ^{A.I.F.} in Hospital.

There are Australian Medical Officers attached to the Staff. The O.C. is a medical man who has been a combatant Officer.

Syphilis and Gonorrhoeal and skin cases are absolutely separated, both as regards sleeping, messing and area accommodation.

Officers are treated in a separate compound.

No early abortive treatment is carried out.

Gonorrhoea - Ordinary treatment. Average duration of stay of cases is 47 days. The majority of the cases in hospital have Gonorr ^{etc}

Syphilis cases - Routine laid down is injections of 606. or substitute starting at .3 gr. up to .6 gr. weekly and weekly injections of grey oil, but in practice only about 100 606 injections are given three days a week. At the end of 7 weeks on an average they are discharged. No attempt is made to do Wasserman reactions as a routine in all cases - only in special cases is it done. After 7 weeks the patient is sent back to his unit. ^{A.I.F.} All the time a /man is in the Venereal Hospital his pay is stopped. The average number of Australians in the Venereal Camp is from 900 to 1,000 and the British authorities are anxious for Australians to have a hospital of their own for these cases in France. Patients are altogether in tents, with wooden floors and wooden stretcher beds. Large mess rooms. Each patient keeps his own messing gear.

~~The majority of the cases in the hospital have Gonorrhoea.~~

The Camp is completely trenched and sandbagged and has revetments.

Pathological Department - Up to date.

Officers' Quarters were separate in different compound. All in huts with separate messes etc., as in rest of hospital.

Report on visit to Hospitals at Havre and Etaples, France (Contd)

51ST GENERAL HOSPITAL, ETAPLES - (British Hospital) - This is Venereal Hospital and has accommodation for 2,000. There were 320 Officers in Hospital, 60 of whom had Syphilis and the remainder Gonorrhoea. No Australians.

Syphilis cases are treated once weekly with Neo Salvarsan and once weekly with Hg. Injection. Have 7 injections and then further course if Wasserman is positive still.

Gonorrhoea cases are treated with injections just the same as at No. 91 General, HAVRE. Average length of treatment for all Gonorrhoea cases is 42 days. Syphilis and Gonorrhoea Officers are kept separate as regards quarters and messing. There is a special hut for Field Officers. Officers well enough to undergo training, marksmanship, machine gun etc., I saw them digging trenches round their huts under orders from G.O.C. District. Officers are allowed out of Camp to ETAPLES on what is called "parole".

Patients act as Orderlies. Men (convalescent venereals) are detailed off to act as batmen for Officers, 1 for 6 Officers and are also utilized for general fatigues duties about the camp. Officers have a committee of control in each hut - senior Officer as O.C. Hut and Officers themselves deal with disciplinary cases amongst Officers - overstaying leave etc., and only in exceptional cases are such breaches of discipline referred to the O.C. The system acts quite well. There are tennis courts for Officers.

There is an Officer on the Staff who superintends courses of training for convalescent Officers under medical directions of Medical Officers.

Taken altogether, the hospital appeared to be better conducted and more satisfactory than the Venereal Hospital visited out of Havre. In the portion of Hospital for Other ranks the system and treatment adopted is much the same as for Officers.