

in a central kitchen. For this hospital of 1200 beds about 12 dieticians will be employed for the service of the patients' food alone.

In American hospitals also, many dieticians are employed in the wards to supervise the actual service of meals and special diets to the patients; it is probable that hospital food service in this country will develop along similar lines, thereby freeing the nursing staff for other duties.

Thus it can be seen that many excellent opportunities exist for valuable and interesting work in the field of hospital nutrition, and that the training and experience which may be acquired in the food service department of a large hospital embrace almost all aspects of dietetics. Unfortunately the supply of suitably qualified and experienced dieticians to fill the posts which are now available, or are likely to be in the near future, is quite insufficient to meet the growing demand. Moreover, many dieticians who have gained experience in hospitals are now being attracted to other fields before reaching the senior positions.

In spite of these difficulties, I am confident that greater results will be achieved by the efforts of dieticians actually holding administrative posts in hospitals, and in close touch with the existing conditions of work, and with the problems of feeding and staff, than by the employment of dieticians in purely advisory capacities.

I hope, therefore, that training courses will hasten to fit dieticians for these posts which are of great importance to the community, providing a constant source of interest, and an ever present stimulus towards extension and improvement.

REFERENCE

Cederström, H. (1945). *Lancet*, **249**, 571.

Discussion

Miss E. Washington (University College Hospital, Gower Street, London, W.C.1), joint opener: The speakers today have, between them, mentioned many of the capabilities and some of the knowledge expected of a dietician. According to them a dietician must possess:

- (1) Scientific knowledge including that of chemistry, physiology, biochemistry and bacteriology, to form a background for the study of nutrition;
- (2) Theoretical knowledge of the principles of nutrition and their application;
- (3) Practical knowledge of buying and storing food, cooking for large and small numbers, distribution and service;
- (4) Knowledge of kitchen planning, and of the installation and maintenance of equipment;
- (5) Knowledge of general domestic management for the proper upkeep of her departments;
- (6) Teaching ability;
- (7) Knowledge of statistics and possibly also of economics.

When all these attributes, which imply a combination of theoretical and practical attitudes of mind not easily encountered, must be combined with the personal qualities of administrative ability, tact, and a

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power to evoke interest and co-operation in others, am I wrong in suggesting that a dietician is expected to be something more than human? This state of perfection cannot be attained by any training in existence or likely to be provided in the future, but only by years of hard and often disillusioning experience. Granted the training and the experience, are such people not then entitled to positions of trust, and conditions of service, sufficiently important to reward them for their years of apprenticeship?

For my part I should like to be severely practical today, and discuss how the present shortage of adequately trained dieticians might be met. In my opinion, however desirable it may be to have dieticians in each of the types of post described this afternoon, we must realize that the number of people qualified to fill them is extremely small. Where for instance are we to find the 700 dieticians for organizing school meals, who are needed according to Mr. Le Gros Clark? Should we not, therefore, try to see where the small number available would be most effective?

I agree with Miss Mills that the catering officer in a large hospital should be a dietician. She alone can see the whole of the problem, and her training is the only one sufficiently comprehensive to qualify her to deal with all the aspects of hospital catering.

In industrial catering, desirable as it may be that the catering officer should be a trained dietician, it is not essential, provided that this person has access to a dietician for advice and, what is quite as important, is ready to take that advice.

Similarly with school feeding, I do not think it is essential that the meals organizer should be a dietician, provided that expert advice, and possibly supervision, on the nutritional side are available.

When sufficient dieticians are available, by all means let them be appointed to these posts but, in the meantime, I feel that the most effective method of using the really well qualified dieticians available, would be to appoint them to two types of post, as catering officers in the large hospitals, and as dieticians attached to the local authorities.

Miss Mills has outlined most adequately the scope of the work in the first type of post, but my view of the possible value of a dietician in public health work is perhaps a little wider than that described by Dr. Brockington. I feel that if she is to be responsible for seeing that the catering of all departments under the control of the local authority is efficiently and adequately carried out, she must have sufficient authority over those in charge of the catering in hospitals, institutions, canteens, and school meals to ensure that her advice is followed. She should not be confined to giving advice on planning of menus, but should be available for consultation on all major problems connected with kitchens, equipment and staffing. The catering officer in any undertaking is in a lonely position, and is the only person able to realize all the problems involved, and is forced to make important decisions. I feel sure that the advice and help of an expert in this way would be welcomed.

On the other hand, as Dr. Brockington has said, the public health dietician should take part in such dietary surveys as are necessary to get a picture of the nutritional status of the local community, and she should be responsible for the training in nutrition of those whose normal work

makes them the most effective agents for nutritional propaganda, such as the health visitors, school nurses, welfare workers and, I would add, teachers.

Having worked for a local authority, I realize what it means to suggest that the dietician should be able to move freely in this way between the various departments of health, education and public assistance, but I see no reason why this freedom should not be achieved if the appointment is made on this understanding, and the dietician herself possesses the necessary tact to make herself welcome.

What I have outlined is a vast undertaking for one person and, under a large local authority, the work would call for a team of two or three capable people but, even so, fewer trained dieticians would be required than if one were appointed to each institution or department.

To fill such positions the dietician should have had experience in each branch of the work. She should have held responsible positions where her own qualities of administration and business ability, her knowledge of cooking and catering, and her ability to interest and obtain the co-operation of all types of people, have been tested. Only under such conditions will she know, from her own experience, the difficulties which have to be faced by the people she is advising, and be in the best position to help them.

This leads to one point which I should like to emphasize, that young and inexperienced girls should not be expected to undertake this work. Experienced women will be available in a very few more years and I feel that, if necessary, it would be preferable to wait that short time rather than wreck the scheme by expecting too much of people who cannot possibly have reached the necessary standard.

Miss E. M. Langley (Medical Branch, Ministry of Education, 15 Chesham Place, London, S.W.1), joint opener: I should like to add a few words to Mr. Le Gros Clark's most comprehensive paper on the place of the dietician in the school meals service. In a few moments he has given us much to think about.

Free Meals. First of all is the question of free meals. All organizers are aware of the fact that they are striving to make provision for the moment when the Free Meals Bill becomes law. It is very unfortunate for planning purposes that no pronouncement can be made as to the date of the Bill. In spite of the need for speed the Minister is most anxious that the free meal when given should be a good one. There must be no falling off in standard and the meals must be served decently.

The majority of local education authorities already have an organizer and many employ assistants. In order to make ready for free meals it will be necessary almost to double the provision already made, which means that the majority of organizing staffs will have to be strengthened. There are good opportunities for the dietician who wishes to join the school meals service and the salaries paid compare very favourably with those paid in hospital and other posts.

The Organizer's Work. In order to accelerate the work it has been necessary to standardize kitchens. I am sorry this has had to happen and I hope the time will not be far off when all organizers will have the opportunity of planning and equipping their own canteens.

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On the catering side, much knowledge of food values can be communicated to the children through the school meals, and this is being done in many areas. It is essential that the school meal should become an integral part of the school life. In this respect we are gaining ground but there is much still to be done.

Mr. Le Gros Clark's phrase, "the organizer must know how to make the spirit of conservative cooking come alive in the most unlikely material" is a real gem. Only the other day I met an organizer who had had a very tough time on her first visit to the kitchens where some elderly ladies with 30 years of experience were employed. The first question was why had she come, the second how often was she coming, and thirdly she was told quite frankly that there was no need for her to come as they knew all about school meals, and all the children needed were ample helpings of mashed potatoes with some nice thick gravy.

In order to succeed, the organizer must secure the co-operation of both the teachers and children. The organizer who comes straight from the diet kitchen and puts on a meal full of vitamins, regardless of its acceptability loses the co-operation at once and it is doubtful whether she would regain it. The children would describe the organizer as someone who comes along and gives them rabbit food. Of course she must aim to arrive at a proper diet but this must not be done too suddenly. Children are very conservative and many have fads and whims; for example, a few months ago I was in a senior school where a tiny boy of 11 who looked about 8 was toying with his first course. I asked him why he did not get on with it; he gave me some vague answer and, on saying he would never grow big, I had the following reply: "I don't want to be big because I want to be a jockey".

There is ample scope and opportunity in the school meals service for the dietician who is an administrator and who has had good experience of large scale catering. May I conclude by a word of caution and say that the meals service is a most difficult one to organize, and only the experienced dietician should make application for the senior posts?

Miss R. Simmonds (Hammersmith Hospital, Ducane Road, London, W.12): The opinion has been expressed that the vision of some dieticians does not extend beyond the hospital boundary. In defence of hospital dieticians I would say that most of them by reason of their work have long been acutely aware that much illness could be prevented by good feeding. They have given up their spare time to teach principles of nutrition in ante-natal clinics, Women's Institutes and canteens, and to give lectures to members of youth organizations, British Red Cross Societies and to schools.

Dr. T. Moore (Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge): A knowledge of nutrition is only one of the many and varied qualifications of training and character which are required of dieticians, who appear to be exclusively of the female sex. They are to be congratulated on the advanced state of organization which has already been reached in teaching dietetics in this country. In contrast we have hardly any facilities for teaching nutrition as a branch of science, worthy of whole time study for its own sake.

Mr. A. L. Bacharach (Glaxo Laboratories, Ltd., Greenford, Middlesex): Dr. Brockington in his admirable exposition of the shape of things to come envisaged a team responsible for the general planning of nutritional work of all kinds for local authorities. I think that his team should be enlarged by the inclusion of the public analyst.

Miss D. F. Hollingsworth (Ministry of Food, Portman Court, Portman Square, London, W.1): As secretary of the British Dietetic Association I want to announce that the Association now has an office at 342 Abbey House, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. The telephone number is Abbey 4909.

A course in nutrition for caterers has been planned by a special planning committee of the English Group of The Nutrition Society. The syllabus has been prepared by a committee with membership drawn from the Royal Sanitary Institute and The Nutrition Society. It covers a minimum of 120 hours of instruction in nutrition, and the courses will be given at various technical colleges. On successful completion of the course students will be granted the Royal Sanitary Institute's Certificate in Nutrition.

Miss F. C. R. Brown (Empire Tea Bureau, 22 Regent Street, London, S.W.1): Commercial experience is essential for all caterers; it does not imply, as many people think, working for profit. In hospitals and other institutions unnecessarily large overhead expenses may be incurred by dieticians lacking such experience.

Dr. J. G. Cormie (The Dispensary, 189 High Street, Stoke Newington, London, N.16): As a general medical practitioner I put forward the plea for including the family doctor as a member of Dr. Brockington's team. An official dietician should be available for consultation at the local town hall and his help would be invaluable.

Dr. L. W. Mapson (Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge): If more dietetic teaching is required it seems essential that the universities should establish departments wholly or mainly concerned with the teaching of nutrition, with special chairs devoted to this science.

Miss R. Pybus replied: *Miss Andross* said that I had put forward a plea for uniform training for dieticians. I really meant the use of a higher standard of training for all dieticians. I mentioned that degree courses were being contemplated, but I do not think that all dieticians should take such a course. It is quite obvious that the duties of dieticians are so diverse that they must be trained in many different ways; I think that their basic training should be more or less the same, but that they should afterwards specialize to fulfil all the different functions about which we have heard today.

Dr. C. F. Brockington replied: The suggestions made for enlarging the nutrition survey team by *Mr. Bacharach*, who wished the biochemist in the shape of the public analyst to be added, and by *Dr. Cormie* that the family doctor also would be valuable, have my entire agreement. It is true that the family doctor often does not have the time to give, but if he had, he would be most welcome.

To *Miss Simmonds*. I must say that I stand rebuked, for it is clear that the hospital dietician does a lot of good work in teaching health. It is nevertheless true that the work could be done by the dietician of the local authority.

I entirely agree with *Miss Washington* that the two chief jobs for dieticians are at present in hospitals and with local authorities. On her fears as to the authority of a dietician working in a public health department I should say that I did not deal in my paper with this particular point, but I had in mind that she would wield authority to look after her own section. She could, it seems to me, quite readily advise on the school meals scheme, which is under the Director of Education, as part of her duties in the public health department. I do not agree with *Mr. Le Gros Clark* that a school meals scheme should have a dietician to itself because in my view the job is too narrow.

Mr. Le Gros Clark replied: A few members seem to hold the view that the courses for dieticians should be more varied in character. At a later stage in the development of the profession, possibly in another 10 years' time, this might be quite appropriate. What is needed at the moment is rather a course of a strictly practical nature intended to equip qualified men and women to play their part in the task of national reconstruction. We have to consider the probable demand for the services of those who qualify. At present the demand arises mainly from the hospitals and a few large institutions; the demand from the field of local government will develop at a slower pace. It is therefore necessary to train persons to undertake the type of work that gives them immediate prospect of employment and of a career. To establish this principle is not to fix the nature of the course for all time; it can be made more varied and specialized as fresh opportunities of employment begin to emerge.

Chairman's Summing Up

Dr. H. E. Magee (Ministry of Health, Whitehall, London, S.W.1): There are four points at which a dietician can exert influence in endeavouring to apply the science of nutrition to communities. How she should discharge, and should be trained to discharge, her functions at these *loci* has been dealt with by various speakers in various ways. I shall endeavour to put before you the greatest common measure of agreement.

(1) *Public Health*. The great mass of the people come under the care, in one way or another, of the local health department, and it is as adviser to the Medical Officer of Health, as *Dr. Brockington* has said, that the dietician can affect the food habits of the greatest number of the people. *Miss Washington* has well said that posts on the staff of local health departments are amongst the most responsible in the whole profession, and require to be filled by senior members of the profession. On this there is general agreement. Holding such a post, the dietician would superintend all the communal and institutional feeding, including that in hospitals, nurseries and schools controlled by the local authority, be generally responsible for educational work in nutrition and dietetics, and conduct dietary surveys when required. In her educational efforts