

EMERGENCY
BED SERVICE

(SHEPHERDSONS ROYAL AGENT FOR LONDON)

REPORT FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 31st MARCH

1963

**THE KING'S FUND
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EMERGENCY BED SERVICE

27th ANNUAL REPORT

Report for the year ended 31st March, 1965

MILLIONTH CASE

On 29th December, 1964, the millionth consecutive case sheet was used by the Service. Case sheet No. 1 was completed in 1938, and the first patient admitted to the Metropolitan Hospital. Since then the Service has had a varied career. Starting in the uneasy peace of 1938 it closed in September 1939 to provide staff for 12 E.M.S. Sector Bed Bureaux, and reopened again in November to help civil patients who had difficulty in finding beds owing to the hospitals being reserved for war casualties.

The Service spent the nights in an air raid shelter during the war, and emerged unharmed at the end of the war to find itself in ever increasing demand. In 1948 it became the agent of the Metropolitan Regional Hospital Boards and its work increased rapidly by some 400%. The Service is the brain child of Mr. A. J. Gardham, who served on the Committee until his retirement at the end of 1964, when his original idea had become an established organisation handling some 60 to 70,000 cases a year.

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The winter of 1964/5 was the second in succession to contain no major epidemic. Before Christmas applications for the admission of general acute cases were about 1100 a week. There was the usual sharp rise following the holiday, and during the first week of January weekly requests for general beds were between 1500 and 1600, thereafter falling to about 1200 a week. March was much busier than in 1964 (See Appendix I). Although the sudden increase was unusual, requests for beds did not reach a high level; in the second half of the month weekly figures were about 1400. The excessive use of the Medical Referee procedure to obtain admission was disturbing; further reference to this is made later in the report.

The total number of cases dealt with during the year was 60,131 compared with 60,927 during the year ended 31st March, 1964.

INFECTIOUS CASES

No serious difficulty was experienced until the end of January, when an outbreak of Sonne Dysentery in a residential children's home in North-West London overtaxed the local fever hospitals. On January 28th, despite the use of the Medical Referee procedure, beds could not be found for two children. Neither of them was seriously ill, but an admission was desirable for public health reasons, and both were admitted next day. On February 4th great difficulty arose in placing 8 more children, some of whom had to be sent as far as Croydon and Epsom.

These small incidents underline the warning expressed in previous reports; the number of beds for these patients is now so small that a comparatively minor epidemic may cause serious trouble.

MEDICAL REFEREE PROCEDURE

The following table shows the Medical Referee rate for the first three months of the last five years:

<i>Jan-March</i>	<i>Admissions</i>	<i>Med. Refs.</i>	<i>% Admitted via Med. Refs.</i>
1961	17,168	2616	15.2
1962	17,083	2766	16.2
1963	20,181	4309	21.3
1964	15,688	2169	13.8
1965	16,221	2644	16.2

Once more it is necessary to draw attention to the extent to which the Service is forced to employ the Referee procedure. The reluctance of hospitals to accept patients voluntarily results in too much delay in the admission of the patient, ill feeling between hospitals and the Service, and additional expense in telephone calls. Even during the summer months of 1964 the proportion of cases admitted through the Referee procedure was between 5% and 8%, which means two to three hundred cases a month. When a case is Refereed in winter the receiving hospital presumably puts up an extra bed, but this is hardly likely to be so in mid-summer. The most serious trouble occurred in March when, despite a comparatively modest demand for beds, the Referee rate averaged over 20% for the month.

MISCARRIAGES

The last report of the Service suggested that there appeared to be a prejudice against accepting cases of miscarriage, and a good deal of the increase in the Referee rate, both in summer and winter, is due to these cases.

There has, of course, for many years been a steady rise in the number of miscarriages offered to E.B.S. In the year ended 31st March, 1965, there were 5919 such cases of which 103 were not admitted, compared with 5668 applications in the previous year, and 3713 in 1955. The following table shows, for each month of the year under review, the number of miscarriages and other gynaecological cases admitted through the Service, together with the number admitted via the Referee procedure:

	<i>Miscarriages</i>			<i>Other Gynaecological</i>		
	<i>Adm.</i>	<i>Med. Ref.</i>	<i>% age Med. Ref.</i>	<i>Adm.</i>	<i>Med. Ref.</i>	<i>% age Med. Ref.</i>
1964						
April	448	62	13.8	124	10	8.1
May	503	63	12.5	110	10	9.1
June	483	70	14.5	108	8	7.4
July	555	85	15.3	89	7	7.9
Aug.	498	43	8.6	94	7	7.4
Sept.	519	76	14.6	113	11	9.7
Oct.	451	56	12.4	99	6	6.1
Nov.	527	72	13.7	100	8	8.0
Dec.	426	29	6.8	77	2	2.6
1965						
Jan.	440	47	10.7	89	7	7.9
Feb.	459	83	18.1	92	13	14.1
Mar.	507	94	18.5	86	9	10.5
TOTAL	5,816	780	13.4	1,181	98	8.3

Since the same type of bed is needed for a miscarriage as for any other gynaecological emergency, this table well illustrates the great reluctance among hospitals to accept miscarriage cases. The Referee rate for miscarriages is more than 60% higher than for other acute gynaecological conditions.

WARNING SYSTEM

A Yellow Warning was in force from January 8th-12th. This period was too short to reveal whether it was effective in reducing the Medical Referee rate, which fell from 13.9% to 12.5% during these 5 days.

MATERNITY CASES

The new catchment area scheme for dealing with the very difficult maternity situation became fully effective on October 1st, 1964, and since that time—and indeed for several months before that date—the number of cases handled by the Service has decreased greatly (see Appendices IV and V).

There is no doubt that the scheme is working well. Patients who need a hospital confinement on medical or social grounds are mostly booked in advance, and the Service is seldom asked to arrange admission at the last moment when the patient is already in labour. With few exceptions E.B.S. cases are genuine obstetric emergencies or women who have failed to seek any advice during pregnancy. It should be noted, however, that the peak period for maternity admissions is usually between March and May so that some difficulties may yet arise.

There have been a few instances, mostly in the early months of the scheme, when it appeared that hospitals were interpreting the scheme somewhat rigidly in so far as emergency admissions were concerned. If this tendency becomes general, difficulty and delay in finding beds will be increased.

VISITS

A Reception in November was attended by members of the medical and lay staff from hospitals in the Greater London Area.

Many informal visits were also received from people connected with the hospital service, and these included medical, nursing and lay staff. The Service is always glad to receive such visits, both from hospital staff and from doctors engaged in general practice.

SECRETARY OF THE EMERGENCY BED SERVICE

After holding the office of Secretary to the Service for 14 years, Commander Langworthy was transferred to another branch of the Fund in February 1965. The Committee is most grateful to him for his valuable and reliable work which enabled the Service to function efficiently and smoothly during his tenure of office. Mr. K. S. Morfey has been appointed Secretary in his place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally the Emergency Bed Service would like to thank all those on whose co-operation it so greatly depends for its work; to the hospitals in the London area, to the Ministry of Health, to the Senior Administrative Medical Officers of the Metropolitan Regional Hospital Boards, and to the general practitioners of London, the Service is very grateful. It would also like to thank the Regional Medical Admissions Officers attached to the Service for their valuable help and advice in dealing with difficult cases.

APPENDIX I

GENERAL ACUTE CASES

8

	Applications	Admissions	Cases not admitted			
			Failures to Admit		Cases withdrawn by applicants	
			G.P. Cases	Hospital Transfers		
1964						
April	4,722 (4,900)	4,572 (4,759)	56 (64)	12 (8)	82 (69)	
May	4,430 (4,618)	4,331 (4,453)	33 (59)	11 (15)	55 (91)	
June	4,272 (4,016)	4,177 (3,920)	27 (25)	4 (11)	64 (60)	
July	4,015 (4,185)	3,947 (4,108)	17 (19)	7 (5)	44 (53)	
August	3,788 (4,074)	3,717 (3,999)	14 (8)	5 (3)	52 (64)	
September	3,850 (4,101)	3,758 (4,032)	12 (19)	11 (2)	69 (48)	
October	4,347 (4,450)	4,247 (4,348)	35 (36)	6 (7)	59 (59)	
November	4,552 (4,618)	4,443 (4,500)	31 (45)	7 (6)	71 (67)	
December	5,046 (5,606)	4,946 (5,492)	32 (37)	2 (4)	66 (73)	
1965						
January	5,764 (5,864)	5,585 (5,705)	63 (75)	8 (11)	108 (73)	
February	4,866 (4,997)	4,729 (4,822)	52 (76)	5 (3)	80 (96)	
March	6,090 (5,307)	5,907 (5,161)	74 (44)	12 (10)	97 (92)	
TOTAL	55,742 (56,736)	54,359 (55,299)	446 (507)	90 (85)	847 (845)	

Figures for the corresponding month of the previous year are shown in brackets.

APPENDIX II

INFECTIOUS CASES

			Total Applications		Total Admissions	
1964						
April ... ..	...	...	340	(442)	337	(437)
May ... ..	...	...	272	(401)	270	(401)
June ... ..	...	...	327	(387)	324	(383)
July ... ..	...	...	334	(399)	332	(396)
August ... ..	...	...	257	(299)	257	(296)
September ... ..	...	...	257	(267)	256	(266)
October ... ..	...	...	330	(319)	326	(316)
November ... ..	...	...	333	(357)	332	(354)
December ... ..	...	...	424	(260)	419	(256)
1965						
January ... ..	...	...	488	(316)	482	(312)
February ... ..	...	...	499	(374)	487	(363)
March ... ..	...	...	528	(370)	508	(367)
TOTAL ... ..	...	...	4,389	(4,191)	4,330	(4,147)

Figures for the corresponding month of the previous year are shown in brackets.

APPENDIX III
GENERAL PRACTITIONER'S ACUTE CASES
ANALYSIS AGE GROUPS

November 15th, 1964—March 6th, 1965

Age Groups	Cases Offered	Percentage Admitted	Increase or Decrease compared with corresponding period of 1963 - 64
Birth—20	3,449 (3,240)	99.8 (99.9)	—0.1%
21—30	2,348 (2,762)	100.0 (99.7)	+0.3%
31—40	1,298 (1,413)	100.0 (99.3)	+0.7%
41—50	1,194 (1,160)	99.6 (99.3)	+0.3%
51—60	2,089 (2,223)	99.1 (98.8)	+0.3%
61—70	3,123 (3,095)	98.9 (97.7)	+1.2%
71—80	3,294 (3,464)	98.4 (97.9)	+0.5%
Over 80	2,204 (2,297)	99.5 (97.8)	+1.7%
TOTAL OFFERED:	18,999 (19,654)		

Figures for the corresponding month of the previous year are shown in brackets.

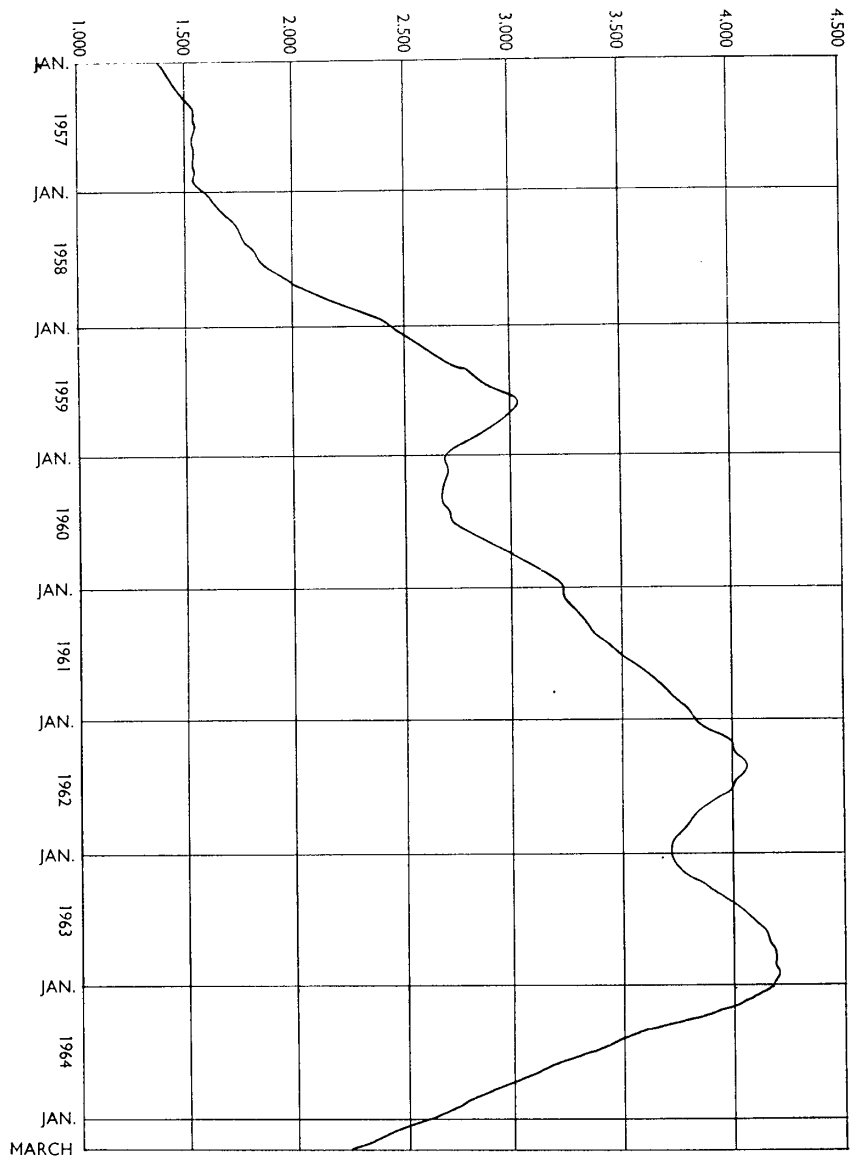
APPENDIX IV

MATERNITY CASES

			Total Applications		Total Admissions	
1964						
April	...	...	275	(417)	272	(406)
May	...	...	278	(446)	272	(428)
June	...	...	270	(410)	263	(389)
July	...	...	239	(359)	234	(355)
August	...	...	219	(339)	214	(328)
September	...	...	220	(319)	206	(314)
October	...	...	139	(283)	136	(278)
November	...	...	123	(235)	120	(227)
December	...	...	136	(256)	132	(251)
1965						
January	...	...	138	(284)	132	(274)
February	...	...	110	(237)	108	(225)
March	...	...	120	(325)	115	(316)
TOTAL	...	...	2,267	(3,910)	2,204	(3,791)

Figures for the corresponding month of the previous year are shown in brackets.

APPENDIX V
MATERNITY CASES—MOVING ANNUAL TOTAL



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