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SELECTION OF TOPIC FOR THE TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS  
DURING THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

The Executive Board at its eighth session adopted a resolution inviting the regional committees to consider the advisability of holding technical discussions on matters of regional interest.<sup>1</sup> This suggestion was supported by the Committee<sup>2</sup> and since 1952 technical discussions have taken place at each session.

Attached is a list of the subjects which have been selected during past years. As far as the topic for the technical discussions in 1970 is concerned, the Committee may wish to consider the following suggestions of the Secretariat.

1. PUBLIC HEALTH IN EMERGENCIES

The occurrence of certain unforeseen catastrophes or calamities, such as severe earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, typhoons, huge conflagrations, floods, widespread destruction due to riots, insurgent action or war, usually results in confusion, panic, displacement of the population and the disruption of essential services, including health /services. The people ...

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB8.R24, Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions, 10th ed., 253

<sup>2</sup> Resolution WP/RC3.R14, WPR Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions, 1969, 6th ed., section 5.5.1, page 19

services. The people are thus placed in great danger and, in addition to injuries and deaths resulting from the initial cause, illness and mortality from other causes can be expected.

Where there is widespread destruction, the establishment of so-called evacuation centres becomes necessary. These require: (a) an adequate water supply, (b) a proper system for the collection and disposal of liquid and solid wastes, (c) adequate sanitary quarters, (d) protection against flies, mosquitoes and other vermin, (e) food sanitation, (f) medical care, and (g) immunization and chemoprophylaxis against certain diseases.

Developments in communication have also made possible the rapid spread of the so-called pandemic diseases, such as influenza, cholera and smallpox. Recent experiences with the Asian and Hong Kong influenza epidemics attest to this fact.

The above happenings, particularly when they occur in developing countries, severely tax existing medical and health services which in many instances are barely enough to meet normal demands. In order to prevent this happening and to be able to meet forthcoming emergencies, it is essential that health administrations should have adequate plans or formulate certain procedures on how to meet emergency situations. The planning, organization and implementation of health programmes to meet certain emergencies might be an appropriate topic for the technical discussions next year.

## 2. THE ROLE OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE PREVENTION OF NUTRITIONAL PROBLEMS

There have been substantial advances in nutrition knowledge in recent years, but its application is often deficient, and there is some evidence of unfavourable developments, especially in urban fringe areas.

/It is proposed to ...

It is proposed to present sketches of a number of topics of common interest, covering the medical and sociological aspects and discussing what sort of steps can be taken by health administrations to improve the general nutritional situation, and to prevent nutritional disorders and deterioration.

For instance, in relation to the main clinical nutritional disorders (protein-calorie malnutrition, vitamin A deficiency and nutritional anaemias) the feasibility and advisability of establishing malnutrition sections in paediatric wards and of community follow-up would be discussed. The assessment of growth retardation and trends in body measurements as indicators of nutritional state would be outlined. Toddler mortality and the interaction of nutrition and infection are fields in which recent knowledge and field studies would be summarized. Recent developments in the control of endemic goitre and anti-carries measures would be discussed. At the other end of the spectrum, obesity and related illnesses, especially in urban populations, would be considered.

Nutritional problems need more adequate coverage in the basic training of health personnel and ways of doing this would be reviewed.

### 3. HEALTH MANPOWER IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

In almost every country there is a rising demand for more and better health facilities. This is a situation which every government must face and provide for within its means. The health manpower shortage is proving to be one of the major obstacles preventing governments from meeting this demand.

Although a health manpower shortage prevails generally in the under-developed countries, the underlying causes often differ greatly from country to country. The majority have an acute shortage of health professionals, inadequately trained health staff, and limited facilities for the basic and technical education required to prepare and build up

/the health manpower ...

the health manpower potential. In a few countries, basic and professional educational facilities exist and a sizeable number of health professionals are already available. Other problems, however, deter the full utilization of their services. These include lack of employment incentives, unsuitable conditions for private practice, concentration in urban areas, attraction to other occupational pursuits and migration to better developed countries.

There is a need to review and bring up-to-date existing orientation, both from the socio-economic and professional points of view, on the types, uses and value of health workers. Favourable changes in community attitudes should influence government policy and help to develop a realistic approach to problems ultimately associated with the health manpower supply and distribution.

A technical discussion on the subject will bring out the problems facing each country and the Region as a whole, and indicate approaches which, in the long run, can ameliorate, if not minimize, the health manpower problem as it now exists.

#### 4. CANCER CONTROL

In the past, cancer has been relegated a low priority in national health programmes due to its proportionately lower occurrence and because the control measures available were either limited or not susceptible to mass application.

During the past decade, ecological and demographic situations even in the developing countries have changed considerably. Although by no means eliminated as a major problem, communicable diseases in general are receding as major causes of mortality and morbidity while the population in the older age groups is increasing in number. In recent years, the health statistical reports received, even from a number of developing countries, show cancer as one of the leading causes of death. At the same time, technical and medical advances are increasingly

/offering better tools ...

offering better tools for cancer control and the prognosis in this disease group is improving.

Technical discussions on this subject would provide public health administrators with an opportunity to consider the magnitude of the problem, its epidemiological aspects and the modern control measures available (preventive, diagnostic and treatment), and to obtain a better insight of the options open to them for initiating control measures against the disease.

5. HOW MODERN TECHNIQUES OF MASS MEDIA (TELEVISION, RADIO AND PRESS) AND OTHER NEW INNOVATIONS DEALING WITH THE USE OF MODERN AND TRADITIONAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION CAN BE EMPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Following the technical discussions on health education held in connexion with the eighteenth session of the Regional Committee, the establishment of health education services in national health programmes is now well under way in countries and territories throughout the Region. Much needs to be done to build up effective health education programmes.

There are many available techniques to draw attention to pressing health problems, to establish urgently needed rapport with the public and to make it aware and ready to participate effectively in national health programmes, which have not been utilized effectively by health administrators. It is suggested, therefore, that the topic, "How modern techniques of mass media (television, radio and press) and other new innovations dealing with the use of modern and traditional methods of communication can be employed in support of comprehensive health education programmes" might be considered as a subject for the technical discussions in 1970.

It is proposed that the discussions feature live demonstrations of some of the more promising methods and discuss how the health administrator can more effectively use these methods to attract attention and public support for his programmes. Consideration might

/also be given to the ...

also be given to the advantages and limitations of various methods and the costs involved in terms of facilities, equipment, personnel and technical services.

ANNEX 1

TECHNICAL DISCUSSION TOPICS  
1952-1969

<u>Year and session</u>	<u>Subject</u>
	COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
1957 (eighth session)	Leprosy control
1963 (fourteenth session)	The role of the local health services in leprosy control
1969 (twentieth session)	The planning and organization of a national epidemiological service
	DENTAL HEALTH
1961 (twelfth session)	Dental health
	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
1962 (thirteenth session)	The role of the health services in the improvement of community water supplies
1966 (seventeenth session)	The role of the health department in environmental health services
	EDUCATION AND TRAINING
1952 (third session)	The education and training of medical and public health personnel
	HEALTH EDUCATION
1965 (sixteenth session)	The use of health education services in national health programmes
	/MALARIA ...

<u>Year and session</u>	<u>Subject</u>
	MALARIA
1958 (ninth session)	Malaria control and eradication
	MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH
1955 (sixth session)	Domiciliary midwifery as an approach to the people in the development of rural health services
1956 (seventh session)	Approach to and management of the pre-school child (from one to six)
1967 (eighteenth session)	The integration of maternal and child health and family planning activities in the general health services
	PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
1953 (fourth session)	Health planning
1954 (fifth session)	Public health administration with particular reference to the organization of health departments
1960 (eleventh session)	The organization and administration of rural health services
1968 (nineteenth session)	Health planning as an administrative tool
	VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS
1964 (fifteenth session)	The use of statistics in public health administration
	TUBERCULOSIS
1959 (tenth session)	The control of tuberculosis