

EDITORIAL

THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH

During the past thirty years Turkey has undergone social and economic reforms, the standard of living has been rising, especially in rural areas, and Turkish infants and children have been enjoying relatively better nutrition and health conditions. These developments, plus the successful antimalarial and BCG campaigns, have been instrumental in diminishing a very high infant mortality from about 340 per thousand down to about 200 per thousand in the past two decades. Much remains to be done. Attempts are being made to carry out nation-wide immunization programs against certain preventable diseases.

Some years ago, a need began to be felt in Turkey for an institute to be devoted to pediatric research and teaching, which would deal mainly with local and regional child health problems, aid in raising the standard of pediatric practice in the country, and eventually contribute to diminishing the still high infant mortality rate.

In 1954 an appeal was favorably received both by the Turkish public and the government for the establishment of such an Institute. By now the greater part of the plant has been constructed and equipment installed. About two-thirds of the 5,600,000 Turkish liras (approximately \$2,000,000) spent for construction and installations has come from the national treasury, and more than one-third from the Turkish public, through the Ankara Child Health Society (a voluntary group organized to support the Institute) and the National Red Crescent Society. This sum does not include Rockefeller Foundation grants totalling \$ 170,000 nor the UNICEF contribution of approximately \$ 30,000 in equipment and supplies. The value of the land, a tract of 15,000 square meters in a central park, which was donated by the municipality, is not less than the investment in the building.

In the summer of 1957, the completed portions of the building gradually began to be occupied and the formal inauguration took place on October 1. However, the legal personality of this establishment came into being on June 23, 1958, and the by-laws of this Research Institute were published in the official gazette on June 27th.

The by-laws are of interest and importance because they give a precise idea of the aims, structure and financial resources of the Institute. Article I affiliates it with Ankara University Faculty of Medicine but reserves its separate legal personality. Article II summarizes the aims and fields of operation as follows: The Institute shall be engaged in research, academic activity and social work in the field of pediatrics, and shall endeavor to raise the standards of pediatrics and reduce the level of infant and child mortality in the country. In order to achieve its aims the Institute shall open hospitals and clinics, conduct seminars and scientific meetings, organize post-graduate training programs and courses, participate in national and international conventions and issue publications.

The Institute is governed by (a) a General Assembly, (b) an Executive Board and (c) a Director.

The General Assembly holds its regular meetings annually. Its members consist of the heads of the different sections of the Institute and the senior members of the pediatric teaching staff of the Ankara University Faculty of Medicine. On recommendation of the Board and election by the General Assembly, distinguished persons who may benefit the Institute may be admitted to membership. In the same fashion, corresponding members from other countries may be elected.

The General Assembly reviews the activities of the Institute, approves the annual budget and staff complement (both being prepared by the Board) and takes action on such other matters as may be referred to it.

The Executive Board is composed of five members, four of whom are elected by the General Assembly from its members for a period of two years, and the fifth is the chairman of the Department of Pediatrics of Ankara University, who is also the Director and chairman of the Board. A General Secretary, elected by the Board, assists the Director and carries out responsibilities delegated to him. In practice the General Secretary is a hospital administrator who is engaged in the administrative side of the Institute, while the Director is concerned more with teaching, planning of research, and other professional activities.

Financial resources are listed in the by-laws as follows :

- a) The sums contributed by Ankara University.
- b) Donations, grants and legacies.
- c) Income from endowments.
- d) Patients' fees and income from other activities of the Institute.
- e) Other sources.

As may be seen from the above, the newly established Research Institute of Child Health possesses a degree of autonomy in administration and financial affairs such as no other health organization in Turkey has enjoyed. Its close connection with Ankara University, on the other hand, provides ample opportunity for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and facilitates its being staffed with pediatric teachers.

On July 6, 1958, at a meeting of the General Assembly, action was taken which formally established the Hacettepe Children's Hospital, having a potential of 180 beds, which would include medical and surgical services, laboratories, research departments, a sizable outpatient service, and a department of pediatric welfare. The Hospital now occupies most of the presently completed premises of the Institute, and about three fifths of the 180-bed theoretical total are ready for occupancy.

In future articles the staffing of the Institute and Hospital and the teaching program will be presented. It is hoped that the establishment of these organizations will mark a milestone in the advance of child health in Turkey. The author has been exceptionally privileged to have taken part in the planning of this project and to serve its continuing development.

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