

THE DENTAL CLINIC IN THE FACTORY.

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THE dental department works independently, but cooperates with the medical division. Before installing a dental office to serve our employees, we corresponded with various corporations who were already operating a similar plan, and received the benefit of their experiences. In one important respect, we disregarded the advice of every concern with whom we communicated. Invariably they advised us to confine our dental work to caring for emergencies, making examinations, giving advice for the care of the teeth, and referring patients to outside dentists for further work.

We feel that the prices asked by good dentists tend to prevent many people from exerting timely care of their teeth—while the low-priced quacks do a great deal of harm. An office doing only emergency work and examinations could not remedy these drawbacks. Our office is therefore equipped not only for free emergency work and preliminary examinations, but to give the very best of all kinds of dental service. The charge for fillings, crowns or any other work is simply the cost of materials and the dentist's time, all work being done on the company's time without loss of wages to the employee.

We started with a two chair office, but before long this had to be enlarged to five chairs to care for the people applying for service. Emergency cases are cared for at once; others desiring attention notify the office, are placed on a

waiting list, and are called in their turns. An estimate of the cost is given upon the examination; and for any work done, arrangements are made for weekly payments, if the employee so desires. Our Kansas City store keeps one dentist busy on the same plan.

This department is presumably self-supporting; as a matter of fact, it has never paid for itself; but we feel that health results more than make up for its extra cost.

No work is done for families of employees, and no one is asked to have his work done in the company's office. If the employee has his own dentist, we invariably advise him to have his work done there, rather than at our office.

The examination of teeth and oral conditions, relief of emergency cases of tooth-ache, and all advice and instruction along Oral Hygiene lines is given free of charge. This latter instruction is considered a very important part of our work, and the personal talk to the employee is what we find gets the results. I might emphasize here that we spend a great deal of time trying to educate the employees regarding the detrimental practices of the dental quack, as a large percentage appear to have patronized these charlatans of the dental profession.

One of the features of dental education is the posting of bulletins on Oral Hygiene; and the importance of the care of the teeth, etc. Oral Hygiene articles are also frequently inserted in a

small newspaper published frequently by the House.

In all of the work, the aim is to co-operate with the medical department, whenever and wherever it is possible, in diagnosing and treatment, and the cause of many cases of continued temperature, rheumatism, neuralgia, etc., has been traced to the teeth.

Employees in dire need of dental services, whose financial condition is such as to prohibit the smallest payment, if found to be worthy by the Welfare Department, are given the required service gratis.

An article by Dr. Earle H. Thomas, the head of our Dental Department, describing in detail the dental service at the Chicago plant of Montgomery Ward & Co., appeared in the "Dental Review" for May, 1917, and I will quote from that:

"Every phase of health and its relation to a clear brain and efficient service is of vital importance to large, progressive industrial corporations in these modern days when "efficiency" is the watchword. Therefore we find, as medical departments of most of them, well-equipped hospitals, with physicians and nurses in constant attendance, resulting in the improvement in health and happiness, and consequent efficiency of our people.

The phase of health that is of especial prominence at present, is the relationship of septic and neglected teeth and mouths to general systemic diseases, and, in view of this, it is not surprising that special consideration be now given to good dentistry by many large corporations thru their welfare, educational or efficiency departments, with the resultant installation of dental departments. Of course, this is a step toward greater efficiency, but humanitarian principles play no small part in its conception and execution.

Many corporations during the last few years have secured the services of dentists whose work was limited to the relief of toothache, the teaching of oral

hygiene, and the examination of the teeth with advice to secure the services of an outside dentist—some corporations even going so far as to make this compulsory. Montgomery Ward & Co., however, were among the first of the larger corporations (they employ around 6,000 in their Chicago plant) to enter into this phase of welfare work on a large scale, with the broader policy of doing for their employees actual reparative dentistry in all its branches except orthodontia. They had no precedent to follow, and so worked out their plans as they went along, trying first one and then another, the peculiarities of dental service under such circumstances taxing the ingenuity of both dental and efficiency departments, until now experience has materialized into a set routine of practical procedure.

It seems that the main objection voiced by most corporations against actual dental work for their employees, is the fear of continual malpractice litigation thru the bad influence of quack lawyers who keep in constant touch with all opportunities for creating trouble around a plant of this kind. Montgomery Ward & Co., however, decided to risk all this trouble and expense in order to benefit their employees, and altho the dental department has been in existence for almost two years, and has taken care of over 3,000 patients, not one suit of malpractice has come up and the employees are practically unanimous in their expressions of praise and good will toward the dental department and its beneficent services.

Another objection to the installation of this kind of service was the perplexing question of the charge for services rendered. To give all classes of the dental service free, would be too paternalistic, and every welfare worker in a large corporation knows that tact in keeping this attitude from the minds of employees needing welfare service is very essential. Free dental service would also have a tendency to suggest to the mind of the

average employee that the work done would not be of the best. On the other hand, to charge for the work would have a tendency to suggest to the employee's mind that the company was trying to make money on the venture.

Montgomery Ward & Co. overcame both of these difficulties and objections by offering free dental examinations, advice and relief of emergency cases, and making a charge for only actual reparative work emphasizing in every possible manner, however, that this charge was the actual cost of the service rendered—in fact, below cost, as no overhead, rent, heat or light expense is charged against the dental office, only the dentists' time and material used.

Nothing in connection with the office is compulsory yet. It has built itself up thru merit and good service from one chair to five chairs, with the actual need and likelihood in the near future of another chair.

The dental office is equipped with a Ritter white enamel equipment, consisting of five chairs.

The office force consists of six dentists, four working full days and two working half days, and one dental nurse. The dentists are employed on straight salary, it being thought inadvisable to place them on a percentage basis, as that might lead to hasty and imperfect work.

The office is open from 8 o'clock A. M. to 5 o'clock P. M. One dentist spends practically all of his time examining teeth, relieving emergency cases and giving individual instruction along oral hygiene lines. The salary of the dental nurse, the overhead expense, heat, light and rent are charged to welfare. The salaries of the dentists plus the material used is the sole basis of reckoning charges against patients having actual reparative work done. Thus, you see that the work is given to the employee below actual cost.

All work is done on the company's time, during working hours, and the employees are paid for their time while

in the dental office. The average time of each visit of an employee to the dental office is three-quarters of an hour, altho there are no restrictions—we may keep him as long as is necessary.

There is a private automatic telephone system in building, and all of our patients are called to the dental office on the telephone about fifteen minutes before they are wanted, thus giving ample time for arranging the handling of their work while away and also plenty of time to get to the dental office. No definite appointments are made with any one unless it is one who is hard to reach by means of the telephone.

When an employee has a toothache, his division manager calls up our office, and notifies us. We usually have the time-keeper (there is one in each division) send the employee to our division at once, unless we are very busy, in which case we aim to call him inside of fifteen minutes. At the time of treating the toothache, if it is necessary, the patient is given a sufficiently long educational talk on oral hygiene, the condition of his mouth and its relation to health. We are invariably then asked to place his name on the waiting list for a thorough examination of his mouth, and if he would like us to do the work, an estimate, based on cost, to be given. We are then usually able to persuade him to have his whole mouth put in good healthy condition. Our emergencies average fifteen per day, and in this manner we reach a number who are not educated along dental lines and who would not think of going to an outside dentist except to get a tooth extracted, and sometimes not even then. In fact, if we are to be of any help to the efficiency of the employees, these are just the people we must reach, as the others will keep their mouths in good condition without our advice.

Even tho the patient intends to have the work done by an outside dentist, careful examination, recommendations and advice are given, and all with the

aim of cooperating with—not antagonizing outside dentists. In fact, we are often of assistance to him in looking after conditions that possibly could not go safely the length of time between visits of the patient to his office.

Patients with very septic mouths who, after examination, say they are going to have the work done outside, are called back to the office a short time later to see if they are having their teeth attended to, and if not, they are given a little stimulation by means of a straight-from-the-shoulder talk.

Medical examination is compulsory, and all new employees are required to pass this, or they will not be employed. When the medical examiner finds distinct evidence of a septic mouth, he refers the employee to the dental office, and his medical examination will not be O. K.'d until he is passed by the dentist. In all of our work, we aim to co-operate with the medical department, whenever it is possible in diagnosis and treatment, and the cause of many cases of continued temperature, rheumatism and neuralgia has been traced to the teeth."

A. H. Stevenson, New York City.

I would add that the whole crux of the situation and the reason this session

under the Oral Hygiene Committee's control, is because our efforts to enlighten the public in oral hygiene have had a peculiar effect. We have brought to their attention the need of dental care, and then these labor people have gone to dentists in their communities,—men whom they thought were capable of taking care of their mouths—who had alluring signs—and it has proved in some cases a curse rather than a blessing. In one of our clinics there were shown four or five bottles containing bridge work placed in the mouths of these poor people, who had paid enormous amounts for them, and for health reasons had to have them removed. We know all professions have that type of practitioner, and in the neighborhood where these people live unfortunately this type of practitioner exists and flourishes.

Industrial employees should receive just as good dental attention as anyone else. We have long recognized that they should receive good medical attention and if they cannot afford to pay for proper dental service it is certainly up to the industrial corporations to see that they get it under industrial corporation control.

