



### THIS MONTH'S COVER

EXCEPT FOR DISASTER by fire or enemy action, the main threat to the Provincial Mental Hospital at Essondale, British Columbia, is the seasonal threat of flooding. This occurs on an area of the hospital property known as Colony Farm, which is adjacent to the Fraser River and is protected by dykes. Some 300 patients live at Colony Farm, which has valuable farm land and cattle.

About eight years ago, following severe flooding in the Lower Fraser Valley during which it was necessary to evacuate 200 Colony Farm patients to other parts of the hospital, a Disaster Organization was set up to mobilize manpower and materials in case of future emergencies.

Two years ago this organization was expanded to fit into the Civil Defense organization of the Vancouver Target Area, which encompasses the hospital. In April 1956 the hospital was officially designated a municipality within the Target Area in order to organize its resources in preparation for any severe disaster and also to become eligible for Civil Defense financial aid.

Although we have not yet held any simulated Civil Defense exercises at the hospital, I, as Civil Defense Coordinator for the institution, keep in frequent contact with the Vancouver Target Area Coordinator and meet periodically with other Coordinators.

The key members of our hospital Civil Defense organization have taken advanced training either at the National Civil Defense Training School near Ottawa or at the Provincial training headquarters in Vancouver. In addition, 100 staff members from various departments, particularly nursing personnel, have voluntarily completed courses in basic Civil Defense given by our own instructors. All nursing staff are trained in First Aid, but so far few non-medical employees have this training.

The hospital's Disaster Control Headquarters is located in the fire hall, which is constantly manned and equipped for any emergency. In addition a large room is being equipped as a Civil Defense Training Center and storage area for emergency equipment. Certain other readily accessible areas are used for stockpiling such items as sandbags and tools. A portable lighting plant is kept at the fire hall and a boat is available at the Colony Farm. Emergency medical supplies and food are always available from the pharmacy and stores departments.

We have an agreement of mutual aid with the surrounding communities involving not only special equipment but manpower. Also, if community hospital facilities were taxed during a disaster, our institution would help provide food, shelter and clothing. We already have had several occasions to test our preparedness. In the 1948 flooding of Colony Farm, for instance, local citizens volunteered, along with patients and employees, to assist in reinforcing the dykes, and we had to set up emergency measures to feed and clothe these helpers. Last year a serious fire which destroyed our large Industrial Therapy building (see MENTAL HOSPITALS, Sept. 1955) and threatened nearby patient dormitories was controlled through the efficient action of the hospital Disaster Organization, with prompt aid from local fire departments.

A. M. GEE, M.D., Director  
Provincial Mental Health Services

Note: Copies of Essondale's Civil Defense Organizational Chart are available from M.H.S. on receipt of 3¢ stamped return envelope. See p. 22 for disaster plan recommendation of the A.P.A. Central Inspection Board and for news of Civil Defense maneuvers at other hospitals.

### CONTENTS, SEPTEMBER 1956

#### Articles

A PSYCHIATRIC TEAM IN ACTION	
Walter E. Barton, M.D.	3
BEHAVIOR PROFILE GIVES PATIENT INFORMATION AT A GLANCE	
W. Earl Biddle, M.D.; Emanuel Chat, M.D.	12
SELECTIVE MENUS AND PREPORTIONED MEATS	
Marie W. Bolduc	16
BUSINESS AND FINANCE MANAGEMENT	
F. A. Matheson	21

#### Special Features

Book Reviews: Centennial Papers, St. Elizabeths Hospital	
Walter E. Barton, M.D.	9
The Nurse and the Mental Patient	
Lucy D. Ozarin, M.D.	10
Disaster Planning in Mental Hospitals	22
The Eighth Mental Hospital Institute:	
Program Topics and Leaders	24
Editorial: Social Psychiatry—New Techniques	
Lucy D. Ozarin, M.D.	24
Institute Highlights	25

#### Architectural Study Project:

Building Study Reveals Significant Trends	29
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#### Regular Features & News

People & Places	10
News & Notes	14
The Patient Day by Day	18
Loan Library Additions	25
Departments	26

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