

The Decrease of Tuberculosis in Chilimanzi Reserve

BY

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The number of sputum examinations (smears only) done in the laboratory of St. Theresa's Hospital and given in the table, throws some light on the success of health education and preventive medicine in the Chilimanzi Reserve.

THE FREQUENCY OF T.B. POSITIVE SPUTUM EXAMINATIONS, 1963-1972.

Year	Total number of sputums examined	A.F.B. positive	per cent
1963	331	9	2,72
1964	518	8	1,54
1965	519	18	3,47
1966	659	8	1,21
1967	960	6	0,63
1968	205	4	1,95
1969	381	4	1,05
1970	400	6	1,50
1971	367	4	1,09
until 15th June 1972	274	1	0,36

St. Theresa's Hospital in Chilimanzi Reserve was opened in 1957, when the population of the Reserve was about 50 000. People in this Reserve have been rather prejudiced as regards "European medicine". They did not like to come for treatment when they were told they had tuberculosis, and years back it was nothing extraordinary when a T.B. patient absconded.

The local health assistants have worked hard and persistently to keep T.B. patients coming for treatment and attending their nearest T.B. clinic. Since 1965 monthly T.B. clinics are being held at the hospital and at out-stations and are conducted by the T.B. Officer for Midlands, Dr. Davies. When in due course the people saw the result of this treatment and realised that T.B. can be cured, their attitude changed completely.

Nowadays our people are informed about T.B., thanks not only to the health assistants but also to our school teachers, to the various clubs which steadily increased up to 1969, and to the newly formed "Young Farmers' Clubs" for boys and girls which are being attached to schools, all being very much concerned about teaching hygiene, and explaining various diseases, their causes and possible prevention. They demonstrate in gardens attached to each school, how to grow vegetables and fruit, how to cultivate the land, and thus help to raise the living conditions of the people.

Our people now do not hesitate to come to hospital when having a bad cold and cough. They are very fond of having an X-ray taken and do not mind to pay for this although on the whole they are still very poor.

One of the greatest benefits for the health of the local people and the decrease of tuberculosis we believe to be the baby clinics which are being run monthly by the hospital staff since 1965, first in three and now in eight different centres in the reserve, each clinic being attended by 70-150 babies. The babies are examined and vaccinated, and the mothers are taught hygiene, nutrition, and all that promotes the wellbeing of the baby.

Not only is T.B. decreasing, but simultaneously whooping cough (up to 31st June we had this year one case of whooping cough only, compared to 12 cases in 1970), and very much so kwashiorkor. Five years ago we added to our hospital a special wing for children suffering from kwashiorkor and tuberculosis. We are just about to close this department as there are hardly patients of this kind left.