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ada News Letter

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EXPANSION AND ACCELERATION OF DENTAL EDUCATION IS SUGGESTED BY N.S.R.B. GROUP TO HELP MEET ANTICIPATED SHORTAGE OF DENTISTS

Suggestions that the nation's dental schools expand present enrollments by 15 per cent and begin operating accelerated (no summer vacations) training schedules to meet anticipated shortages of dental manpower were made this week by the Health Resources Advisory Committee of the National Security Resources Board.

In a report presented yesterday (March 19) to the A.D.A. Board of Trustees in Chicago and repeated this afternoon at French Lick, Ind., at the annual meeting of the American Association of Dental Schools, Dr. Leo J. Schoeny, of New Orleans, dental member of the N.S.R.B. committee, estimated that there would be a shortage of 9,200 practicing dentists in the United States by 1954. At the present rate of training, the shortage would reach 10,700 by 1960, he said.

Within three years, the nation will need 93,100 dentists, approximately 13,000 more than are presently engaged in practice, to meet military and civil defense requirements for dental manpower and to maintain the same ratio of dentists to civilian population that existed in 1949, Dr. Schoeny said.

He estimated needs for dental manpower by 1954 as follows: Civilian requirements, 80,700; armed forces, 10,000; civilian defense reserves, 1,500; additional faculty members for dental schools, 200; additional staff for public health services, 600, and additional staff for industrial health services, 100.

Dr. Schoeny said that the armed forces would need 7,000 dental officers for the authorized 3,500,000 troop strength in 1951 and would need 10,000 dental officers in 1954 "on the assumption of a possible troop strength of 5,000,000 by that date." He added:

"It should be pointed out that this is an assumption only, for there is no way to forecast accurately what the actual size of the armed forces may be by that date."

Dr. Schoeny also suggested that the profession should give additional consideration to the present working ratio of two dentists for each 1,000 troop strength. He said that the committee did not believe such a ratio "is a permanent minimum necessity or that there are sufficient dentists available to supply these needs without serious disruption of other essential categories. Obviously, the problems of utilization in the armed forces should be a matter of continuing study."

While describing the anticipated deficit in dental manpower as "a serious threat to the health and welfare of our people," Dr. Schoeny emphasized that the N.S.R.B. committee, headed by Dr. Howard A. Rusk, of New York, was not attempting to tell the dental profession that it must expand or accelerate dental training. He added:

"I would like to reemphasize that...it is not within the province of the Health Resources Advisory Committee of the National Security Resources Board or of me as its spokesman here today to recommend the steps that should be taken by our schools of dentistry to meet this need for additional dentists. Our committee is an advisory body to the chairman of the National Security Resources Board, not to the nation's dental schools or the dental profession. The decision as to what can be done is a responsibility of the dental schools and the dental profession. From our studies and experience, however, it seems to us that the only way this need can be met is through some form of acceleration and/or expansion."

He pointed out that a 15 per cent increase in enrollments over 1949 averages beginning next September would produce no increase in graduates for four years. By the summer of 1960, he estimated, a 15 per cent increase in enrollments would produce but 2,400 of the needed 10,700 additional dentists.

If dental training were to be accelerated by eliminating the traditional summer vacations and by the enrollment of new classes each nine months, the dental schools would be able to graduate an additional 2,900 dentists within three calendar years. This would amount to 5,800 dentists by 1960, he said.

Dr. Schoeny explained that if both acceleration and expansion of dental training were to be accomplished this year, there still would be a shortage of 1,700 dentists to meet all requirements in 1960.

"The remaining deficit is still too large even when both increased enrollment and acceleration are put into effect to reduce the gap," he said. "Belts will have to be tightened all around even with such a program. Perhaps we should consider the question as to whether we need to fill the total deficit...."

Dr. Schoeny pointed out that the N.S.R.B. committee is also concerned with the problem of insuring a sufficient flow of students into pre-professional and later professional training to meet both the military and the civilian health needs of the nation.

He reported that the committee, which also functions as the National Advisory Committee to Selective Service, is empowered to review the overall quotas of the Department of Defense for physicians, dentists and veterinarians after each of the three military services has established its projected requirements.

Effective April 1, state advisory committees of the National Advisory Committee will check the names of all reserve dental and

medical officers being recalled for active duty with the exception of members of organized reserve units, Dr. Schoeny said.

State committees will be empowered to determine the essentiality of the individual reserve officer to the health and welfare of his own community and either declare the individual available for military service or ask that his call-up to active duty be delayed because of essentiality. Disputes between the armed forces and the state committees will be decided by the Secretary of Defense.

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