

K.F. 7/31.

KING EDWARD'S HOSPITAL FUND FOR LONDON

PATIENTS' WAKING HOURS
IN
LONDON VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS

Being a Report by a Sub-Committee
OF THE
DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

MAY 1931



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The Management Committee of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, having received from the Distribution Committee the attached Report of a Sub-committee on the subject of Patients' Waking Hours, resolved that the Report be circulated for the consideration of the Hospitals concerned, in the hope that it may assist the Hospitals, so far as their different circumstances may permit, to fix an hour not earlier than the time suggested in the Report.

7 WALBROOK, E.C.4.

May, 1931.

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The enclosed memorandum is circulated for the consideration of the Hospitals concerned. It will be published on May 28th and additional copies can then be obtained from the publisher.

H. R. MAYNARD.

Secretary.

7, Walbrook, E.C.4.

May 16, 1931.

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May, 1931.

KING EDWARD'S HOSPITAL FUND FOR LONDON.

PATIENTS' WAKING HOURS IN LONDON VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS.

1. The Report of the Distribution Committee to the General Council in December, 1930, contained the following reference to the form of Report used by the Fund's Visitors who, in June and July, 1930, inspected the Hospitals receiving grants from the Fund :

" Among the points to which the attention of all Visitors is now explicitly directed is a series of questions grouped under the general heading ' Comfort of Patients.' One of these questions deals with the hour at which patients are awakened in the morning, and was ' starred ' by the Distribution Committee for special report by the Visitors this year. The replies will require a thorough study by the Committee, and probably consultation with some of the hospitals, and this will be undertaken after the distribution is finished."

2. The replies of the Visitors were accordingly referred by the Distribution Committee early in 1931 to a Sub-committee consisting of Mr. Walter Spencer, F.R.C.S. (Chairman), Dr. Morley Fletcher, F.R.C.P., Mr. Eardley Holland, F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., and Sir Harold Wernher, K.C.V.O.

SUMMARY OF VISITORS' REPORTS, JULY, 1930.

3. The hours of waking are summarised, for the different groups of Hospitals, in the table in Appendix I. This table gives the following results, classified under the earliest hour mentioned by the Visitors :—

(a) 4, 4.30 or 4.45 a.m.	..	..	4 hospitals
(b) 5 or 5.15 a.m.	..	..	40 "
(c) 5.30 or 5.45 a.m.	..	..	22 "
(d) 6 a.m.	..	..	44 "
(e) 6.30, 6.40 or 6.45 a.m.	..	..	8 "
(f) 7 a.m.	..	..	6 "
(g) average of teaching hospital group			5.55 a.m.
(h) averages of other general hospital groups	..	..	5.10 to 5.35 a.m.
(k) averages of special hospital groups			5.30 to 5.55 a.m.

4. Amongst the Hospitals where the hour is after 6 may be specially mentioned the Middlesex, where the recent change of hours has drawn a good deal of attention to the general question. The male patients are awakened at 6.30 and the female at 6.45.

EXTRA-METROPOLITAN HOSPITALS, APRIL, 1930.

5. The Sub-committee also considered a Memorandum issued by the Central Bureau of Hospital Information in April, 1930, summarising the information supplied by 63 large general Hospitals outside London. Some general conclusions printed in the Memorandum are given in Appendix II. The questions asked by the Bureau dealt with existing hours and with the effect of postponing the waking of patients till 7 a.m. In 45 instances work in the wards began before 6, in 13 at 6, and in 5 after 6. Objections to an hour as late as 7 were mentioned by 42 Hospitals out of the 63.

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL HOSPITALS, NOVEMBER, 1930.

6. The Sub-committee also had before them a published Report by the Central Public Health Committee of the London County Council on the question "whether any, and if so what, medical or other advantages accrued to the patients of the Council's Hospitals from being awakened before 6 a.m." The Report states that in 10 of the 28 Hospitals previously under the Guardians waking was at or before 5; that in 9 it was at 5 or later; and that in 9 it did not begin till 6. The Central Public Health Committee now propose that, so far as practicable, no patient should be awakened, except in special circumstances, before 6 a.m.; that the Hospitals below that standard should be raised up to that standard as and when staff should be available; that the change should be gradual; and that the matter should be further considered in a year's time.

ITEMS OF EARLY MORNING WORK.

7. In considering the necessities of Hospital work and the welfare and comfort of the patients there are other matters to be taken into account besides the actual hour of waking; and in these, also, there are differences in the procedure at different Hospitals. The various processes that have to be carried on throughout each ward include, for instance, the use of urinals and bed-pans, the washing of the patients and the making of the beds. The time-table has also to provide for the serving of food, which may consist of breakfast only, or of early tea first and breakfast later.
8. As this procedure has to be gone through with every patient in turn, much time is taken up. In arranging the hour when these processes must be finished, a sufficient interval must be left

between breakfast and the light mid-morning lunch. Moreover, the washing, etc., for the patients who are dealt with last must be completed in time for the first visits of the medical officers. This, in the experience of the Sub-committee, usually means by about 10 o'clock, though a good many of the returns from the extra-metropolitan hospitals mention an hour as early as 9. In calculating from this the time when work must be begun for the patients who are dealt with first, it is often the practice to decide on an official hour, but to arrange for work to be begun before that hour with such of the patients as happen to be awake.

9. Within the limits thus determined, the order of the different processes may vary. At some Hospitals the patients are washed before breakfast, at others breakfast comes first. Sometimes as many as possible of the patients are washed before breakfast, and the rest afterwards. Sometimes early morning tea is served immediately on waking, and breakfast an hour or so later, after all the washing is done.
10. Another factor in the time-table is the division of the work between the night and day nursing staffs, and the hours when the night nurses go off duty and the day nurses come on. There is an overlap usually of from one hour to an hour and a-half.

SUGGESTIONS.

11. The question is much more complicated than it might seem at first sight to those who think only of the actual hour of waking. It is certainly a question on which the King's Fund, if it takes action at all, would only do so, as the Distribution Committee suggested in their Report to the Council last December, after consultation with the Hospitals concerned. Nevertheless, the Sub-committee have formed definite opinions on some points and consider that, if the Distribution Committee think fit, these may well be made the subject of consultation.
12. It has been shown that, in the London Voluntary Hospitals, 6 o'clock is at present the official hour of waking more often than any other hour.
13. There is also a good deal of evidence that Hospitals which have already made a change to 6 o'clock from some earlier hour, or which would be prepared to consider the possibility of such a change as a practical question, would nevertheless regard the difficulties in the way of the adoption of so late an hour as 6.45 or 7 as insuperable.

14. After taking these facts into account, and after having also considered the varieties of practice in the other matters mentioned in this Report, the Sub-committee are of opinion :

- (i) that, unless there is some exceptional and adequate reason to the contrary, the most suitable hour for the waking of patients is 6 o'clock ; bearing in mind the fact that, in a Hospital, work closes down for the night long before the hour at which the patients are accustomed to go to bed when at home ;
- (ii) that, while the adoption of any later hour would probably require an addition to the nursing staff, a change to 6 o'clock on the part of most of the Hospitals which now have an earlier hour could probably be effected without any material increase of staff or expenditure ;
- (iii) that, at some of the Hospitals where the present hour is exceptionally early, it may well be impossible to change to 6 o'clock without increase of staff, but that nevertheless in those Hospitals a change is so desirable that the question should be considered ;
- (iv) that breakfast should be served as soon as possible after the hour of waking ; and that work involving the disturbance of the patients before breakfast should be limited as far as possible to what is necessary for their comfort ;
- (v) that, whatever the official hours may be, no patient should be washed before having either breakfast or early morning tea ;
- (vi) that the rules and the practice should be such as to avoid as far as possible any noise in the wards before 6 o'clock.



APPENDIX I.

PATIENTS' WAKING HOURS
IN
LONDON VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS.

SUMMARY OF THE KING'S FUND VISITORS' REPORTS IN JULY, 1930.
(Classified under the earliest hour mentioned by the Visitors.)

Group in King's Fund Statistical Review, July, 1930.		Aver- ages of Groups a.m.	4, 4.30 or 4.45 a.m.	5 or 5.15 a.m.	5.30 or 5.45 a.m.	6 a.m.	6.30, 6.40 or 6.45 a.m.	7 a.m.
Number.	Description.							
I.	Teaching Hospitals	5.55	—	2	2	6	2	—
II.	General Hospitals with 150 beds or more	5.25	—	5	1	1	1	—
III.	General Hospitals with 70-149 beds	5.20	1	7	6	3	—	—
IV.	General Hospitals with under 70 beds (with R.M.O.)	5.10	1	4	—	1	—	—
V.	Other General and Cottage Hospitals with 30 beds or more	5.30	1	8	2	3	1	—
VI.	Other General and Cottage Hospitals with under 30 beds	5.35	1	2	—	5	—	—
VII.	Hospitals for Women	5.45	—	2	1	2	—	1
VIII-IX.	Children's Hospitals (<i>see note below</i>)	5.55	—	—	2	7	—	—
X.	Maternity Hospitals	5.30	—	3	3	3	—	—
XI-XIV.	Other Special Hospitals	5.42	—	7	5	13	4	5
Totals		—	4	40	22	44	8	6

Note.—At the other 17 Hospitals receiving grants from the King's Fund in 1930, mostly Hospitals for Children or for Babies, either there was no fixed hour, or the replies could not be tabulated.

APPENDIX II.

CENTRAL BUREAU OF HOSPITAL INFORMATION.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM REPLIES FROM 63 LARGE GENERAL
EXTRA-METROPOLITAN VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS.

From Memorandum issued by the Bureau in April, 1930.

- " 1. That the day nurses in the majority of cases come on duty at 7 a.m.
- " 2. That the night nurses in the majority of cases go off duty from 8 to 8.30 a.m.
- " 3. That the time on duty of the night staff overlaps the time on duty of the day staff in the majority of cases from one hour to an hour and a-half.
- " 4. Work begins in the wards in 45 instances before 6 o'clock and in 18 instances at 6 o'clock or later.
- " 5. The interval between the beginning of work and breakfast varies from 0 to 2½ hours. The great majority of Hospitals allow from 30 to 60 minutes.
- " 6. The interval between the beginning of work in a ward and the visits of the Honorary Medical Staff varies in those Hospitals in which the Honorary Staff visit in the morning from 3 to 6½ hours. The majority allow 4 to 5 hours.
- " 7. With regard to the column showing the extra staff required (*i.e.* for waking at 7 a.m.), the various opinions expressed reflect the difficulty involved in estimating the effect on staff whenever a load factor is increased sharply and for a limited period.

"R. H. P. ORDE,

"April, 1930.

Director."

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