



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1975

## SPINAL INJURIES UNIT IN KOWLOON HOSPITAL

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PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURIES WHICH LEAD TO TETRAPLEGIA OR PARAPLEGIA COULD BE BED-RIDDEN OR WHEELCHAIR-BOUND FOR LIFE AND MAY EVEN DIE IF NOT TREATED PROPERLY AND EARLY. HOWEVER, IF THESE PATIENTS, SUFFERING FROM PARALYSIS OF LIMBS AND LOSS OF SENSATION TO TOUCH AND PAIN, WERE TREATED IN A SPECIAL CENTRE AT AN EARLY STAGE AFTER INJURY, THEIR FATE COULD BE ALTERED ALTOGETHER.

IN FACT, A HIGH PROPORTION OF SUCH PATIENTS ADMITTED TO THE SPINAL INJURIES UNIT IN THE KOWLOON HOSPITAL WITHIN DAYS OF SUSTAINING THE INJURY HAVE BEEN MADE TO WALK AGAIN WITHOUT APPLIANCES.

STATISTICS FOR 1974 SHOW THAT 50 PER CENT OF THOSE ADMITTED TO THE UNIT AT AN EARLY STAGE AFTER INJURY WERE ABLE TO WALK AGAIN WITHOUT AIDS AFTER TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION, AND 30 PER CENT COULD MOVE ABOUT WITH WALKING AIDS. ONLY A MINORITY WITH SEVERE INJURIES HAD TO DEPEND ENTIRELY ON WHEELCHAIRS.

THE SPINAL INJURIES UNIT IN KOWLOON HOSPITAL, THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND IN HONG KONG, OPENED IN JULY 1973 TO TREAT AND REHABILITATE SPINAL CORD INJURY PATIENTS.

PRIOR TO THE SETTING UP OF THIS UNIT, SUCH PATIENTS WERE TREATED IN CLINICAL UNITS OF VARIOUS HOSPITALS AND MANY OF THEM ARE THEN TRANSFERRED TO OTHER HOSPITALS OR CENTRES FOR REHABILITATION. THIS METHOD OF TREATING PATIENTS IN ONE HOSPITAL FOR THE ACUTE STAGE AND REHABILITATING THEM LATER IN ANOTHER CENTRE WAS CONSIDERED TO BE NOT FULLY EFFECTIVE. CONSEQUENTLY, THE SPINAL INJURIES UNIT WAS FORMED WHERE THE WHOLE PROCESS OF TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN THE SAME PLACE AND AT THE SAME TIME.

THE UNIT ADMITS PATIENTS ON A REFERRAL BASIS, FROM VARIOUS MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG. WHEN ADMITTING PATIENTS, PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO TRAUMATIC CASES, BUT OTHER CASES DUE TO NON-PROGRESSIVE DISEASES OF THE SPINAL CORD MAY BE CONSIDERED. PRIORITY FOR ADMISSION IS GIVEN TO EARLY AND UNCOMPLICATED CASES, AND SECOND PRIORITY TO COMPLICATED CASES WITH SOME PROSPECTS OF DOMESTIC OR HOSTEL RESETTLEMENT.

THE UNIT, WITH 60 BEDS, GIVES ACUTE TREATMENT AND ACTIVE REHABILITATION TO ITS PATIENTS. IT IS NOT A CONVALESCENT HOME OR HOSTEL, AND CERTAINLY NOT A "DUMPING GROUND" FOR THE OLD AND INVALID. THE UNIT HAS ITS OWN DOCTORS, NURSING STAFF, PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS AND MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKERS.

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ACCORDING TO THE DOCTOR IN CHARGE OF THE UNIT, THE OUTLOOK OF THE SPINAL CORD INJURY PATIENTS IS BRIGHT.

✦MANY OF OUR PATIENTS CAN ACTUALLY RECOVER TO BE ABLE TO WALK INDEPENDENTLY, AND MANY OTHERS ACHIEVE MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE ON WHEELCHAIRS. ONLY A MINORITY WITH SEVERE DISABILITY HAD TO BE INSTITUTIONALISED FOR LIFE, ✦ HE SAID.

GIVEN THE PROPER ENVIRONMENT, THE DOCTOR SAID, MOST OF THEM SHOULD BE ABLE TO BE INTEGRATED BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY, AND LEAD A NORMAL LIFE.

HE REITERATED THAT THE EARLIER THE PATIENTS WERE REFERRED TO THE UNIT, THE BETTER THE CHANCE OF THEIR RECOVERY.

THE TIME SPENT ON TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF THESE PATIENTS NORMALLY TAKES BETWEEN SIX AND NINE MONTHS, AFTER WHICH THEY ARE DISCHARGED.

HOWEVER, THE WORK OF THE UNIT DOES NOT END THERE. BEFORE A PATIENT IS DISCHARGED, THE UNIT'S REHABILITATION TEAM WOULD VISIT THE PATIENT'S HOME TO ASSESS HIS LIVING ENVIRONMENT. IF THE PATIENT'S HOME IS FOUND NOT SUITABLE, MEASURES WILL THEN BE TAKEN TO MODIFY IT, E.G. RECONSTRUCTING THE BATHROOM AND THE STAIRCASES, OR TO MAKE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PATIENT TO BE REMOUSED.

DISCHARGED PATIENTS ARE ALSO REFERRED TO OTHER CENTRES FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING OR JOB PLACEMENT SO THAT THEY CAN BE INTEGRATED BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY. THEY ARE ALSO FOLLOWED UP AT REGULAR INTERVALS IN THIS UNIT FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIFE.

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88,000 PEOPLE TO BE HOUSED THIS YEAR  
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SOME 88,000 PEOPLE WILL BE HOUSED IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR UNDER THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S 10-YEAR HOUSING PROGRAMME.

THEY WILL BE ACCOMMODATED IN ABOUT 17,200 PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS AT OI MAN, LEK YUEN, LAI KING, UPPER PAK TIN, KWAI SHING AND LEI MUK SHUE ESTATES.

OF THE 17,200 FLATS, 10,900 WILL BE COMPLETED IN THE NEXT 10 MONTHS WHILE THE REMAINING 6,300 FLATS ARE NOW AWAITING OCCUPATION.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY PROVIDED HOUSING FOR 64,200 PEOPLE LAST YEAR AND THE MAJORITY OF THEM WERE FROM THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S WAITING LIST.

CURRENTLY, THERE ARE SOME 92,000 PENDING APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST.

FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF THE APPLICANTS, THE APPLICATIONS SECTION OF THE DEPARTMENT HAS DIVIDED THE WHOLE OF HONG KONG INTO EIGHT AREAS. THESE ARE: HONG KONG EAST, HONG KONG WEST, KOWLOON EAST, KOWLOON CENTRAL, KOWLOON WEST, TSUEN WAN, SHA TIN AND TUEN MUN.

APPLICANTS WILL NEED ONLY TO FILL IN THE LOCATION OF THEIR PARTICULAR CHOICE.

THE ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS IS THAT: (A) THEY MUST BE 21 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER= (B) THEIR FAMILIES MUST CONSIST OF NOT LESS THAN THREE PERSONS= (C) THEY AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS MUST BE RESIDENTS OF HONG KONG AND (D) THEIR TOTAL FAMILY INCOME MUST NOT EXCEED THE PERMITTED AMOUNT FIXED BY THE AUTHORITY.

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