

# Traditional Problems of Public Health Giving Away to New Ones

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Change seems to be characteristic of this era. The traditional problems of public health are giving way to others that were undreamed of a few decades ago. Chronic diseases, accident prevention, and radiation control are but a few of the new areas that are now of concern to public health officials. And even the mass public health approach of earlier years is being replaced

by official solicitude for individual well-being. It is true that many of the traditional problems of public health, though changed, are still with us. The communicable diseases, for instance, will evidently be around as long as man. Preventives against many such illnesses have been discovered, but they are not used as widely as they should be.

IN THE CASE of poliomyelitis, for example, it is estimated

that even with the Salk vaccine available only about 50 per cent of this country's population under 20 years of age have been vaccinated with three doses, the minimum considered necessary for protection against the disease.

The public lack of knowledge concerning disease control, or a failure to apply such knowledge, was revealed in a recent mortality study conducted in one of the communities of an eastern state.

IT WAS conservatively estimated that 13 per cent of the total number of community deaths could have been avoided if prevailing knowledge of disease prevention and control had been applied. The possibility of prevention varied from nearly 100 per cent for such communicable diseases as polio and malaria to 15 per cent for cancer and 10 per cent for coronary artery disease.

Health authorities state that

the sum total of the health of the individual in the community constitutes what is called "community health," and that good community health can be brought about only if the individual co-operates with private physicians and public health workers making, as it were, a triangular health team. To be sure, available health or disease information and services are in large part useless unless the individual takes advantage of them.

DISCOVERING the motivation by which millions of peo-

ple can be induced to make full use of preventive medical care and public health facilities remains a tantalizing problem for which there is yet no final solution.

One local effort to further the dissemination of existing health information will be made during the annual Community Health Week which starts on March 19. Sponsored by official and voluntary community agencies and many civic-minded citizens, the program serves to focus attention on certain community health problems while, at the same

time, it increases public awareness of available health and welfare services.

INASMUCH as the success of a health program depends so greatly on the co-operation of the individual, one eminent physician suggests that it would now seem reasonable to discard such terms as "public health," "curative medicine," and the like and substitute "community health," which, to him, seems to be more in keeping with the recognition of the

person as an important unit in community life.

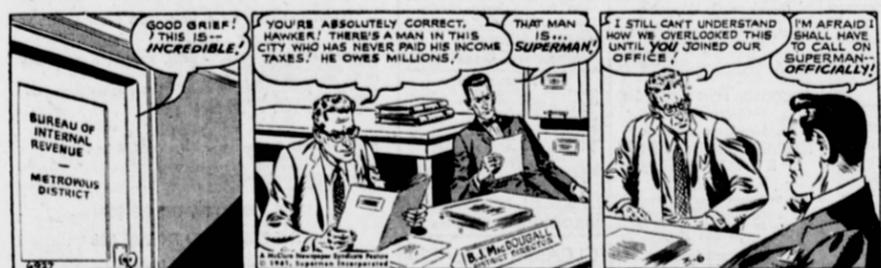
However, be that as it may, it is apparently coming close to the time when it will be generally accepted that the adult individual bears a responsibility to the community for the maintenance of his own good health and that of his children. In this complex modern world, it seems that "no man can live solely for himself, even in so personal a matter as the health of his own body."

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By Lew Kleis



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