

MEDICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

The following communication on the need for medical education in China has been received:

China is accepting western civilization. Prejudice has largely gone. Intercourse with other nations has brought about enlightenment. Western medicine has gradually won its way into favour, owing to the convincing results of medical and surgical cures, combined with the spirit in which they were wrought. Until quite recently the work of the medical missionary was of a pioneering nature. But these pioneer efforts have resulted in a change of mind, and this has wrought a change in the scope of medical work. Medical science is much more exact and exacting than formerly. Coincidentally there is the problem of handling the ever increasing number of patients. Either the number of foreign physicians must be greatly increased, or adequate facilities for training Chinese students, male and female, in accredited medical schools must be provided.

Obviously, the former alternative is impracticable. While a large increase in the number of foreign physicians (and the same is true of dentists and nurses) will be necessary for years to come, it is becoming increasingly doubtful whether, even given the necessary funds, it would be possible to find in Europe and America a sufficient number of highly qualified doctors and nurses adequately to staff the existing medical institutions in China, to say nothing of attempting to cope with the sum total of the medical needs of the country. Even if the quantity of work done is not to be increased, a large number of highly trained Chinese doctors and nurses are needed at the earliest possible moment to carry it on properly, and for this personnel the hospitals must look to the schools.

What is urgently needed is a large increase in the number of duly qualified, graduate Chinese physicians, dentists, nurses

and pharmacists, so as to greatly augment the good done by their foreign colleagues. Since the future of medicine in China must be in the hands of her own physicians, wisdom dictates that Western aid should be considered in the light of the future output of Chinese physicians. The system of medical education will not be complete unless there are available a small number of teaching hospitals connected with the medical schools, in which the medical students can be given their clinical instruction, and in addition a large number of other well equipped hospitals where nurses can be trained and in which Chinese doctors as internes, resident physicians and surgeons, and finally, as members of the visiting staff, can get, in a stimulating atmosphere, under proper supervision, the practical experience that they need to prepare them for assuming independent responsibility. Otherwise, serious deterioration in professional efficiency is the certain result. In other words, good hospitals are needed to supplement the school training and to conserve the men whom the schools turn out.

The leaders in medical science in China are agreed that in medical education lies the strategic basis for adequate future development. To no other group of professional men is there afforded such intimate opportunity for influencing society. And it is here that sufficient ground is found for pressing forward with medical teaching in Christian institutions. The men who go out with the Christian ideal of service and sacrifice, together with professional training of the highest type, are men who are sure to influence the China of to-morrow.

What has been written above applies also, in almost every particular, to the allied professions of dentistry and nursing. These three healing professions should develop synchronously and uniformly in China, because they constitute an essential trinity, each element of which supplements the others.

Chentu, West China.

CHAS. W. SERVICE, B.A., M.D.