

HEALTH AND WELFARE OVERSEAS

by Dr. L.L. Palmer



Health and Welfare has over twenty doctors working abroad at various posts around the world. They are temporarily seconded to the Department of External Affairs but report to Health and Welfare in Ottawa. It is considered to be essential that doctors keep medical information in complete confidence and all medical documents should be sent to Health and Welfare and not given to the employer. This is exactly the same practice as with other departments working in Ottawa.

The medical offices abroad are spread around the world and the structure is such that there are doctors who are called Zone Directors and the others are called Regional Medical Officers. The Zone Directors are situated in Trinidad, London, Paris and Hong Kong. The posts at which there are regional

medical officers located, besides the above-mentioned posts, are Mexico, Jamaica, Bonn, Rome, Athens, Abidjan, Nairobi, New Delhi, Singapore and Manila.

The medical officers abroad have two different programs. The first is Public Service Health and the second is medical assessment of immigration cases.

The Public Service Health program is much like an occupational health program in a large company. The doctors who are familiar with the living conditions, the local problems, and customs as well as the treatment facilities which are locally available, can help Canadian civil servants abroad. The medical officers who are recruited for this job usually have considerable clinical experience and are very competent doctors. They are available to Canadian Federal Civil Servants for consultation and minor treatment. They can also act as liaison between management and the employee. The medical officer also has a duty to his clients to make sure that the immunization schedule is kept up, to supervise such things as examination of servants under FSD 38 and to concern himself with the morale of the post.

The medical officers also make visits to other posts in their area. For instance the doctor in Abidjan visits Dakar, Bamako, Niamey, Ouagadougou, Accra, Lagos, Yaounde, Kinshasa, and Libreville. The other zone offices also send medical officers to

visit posts in their area. At a post visit, the doctor has a number of functions but the most important to the employee is personal counselling. Probably the second most important function from the standpoint of the employee is that the Regional Medical Officer will recommend the doctors and hospitals he believes to be the most competent and this is not done without considerable thought and study.

Medical assessment of immigration documents is a considerable part of the medical officer's work but is a specialized job and need not concern us here.

Only recently a number of mini clinics have been opened. These are in places where medical services are hard to obtain or are inadequate. These clinics are all staffed with a doctor or a nurse and intend to provide more extensive treatment than was previously done by the Regional Officer alone.

We explained in the June issue of "Liaison" that it is a good idea to keep your documents on file in Ottawa. These can either be sent directly to Health and Welfare in Ottawa or they can be given to the Regional Medical Officer who will forward them routinely with his own reports. This will make it more convenient for you. Again it is emphasized that these medical confidential documents remain just what the term implies medical/confidential.

FSD'S AND OUR LIVES ABROAD

It's that time of the year again, and many of us are on the move or settling in at a new post. By now, a copy of the 1982 Directives should have caught up to everybody, and there are whole cadres of FSD experts out there.

At least one copy of the English version of the corrections to the Foreign Service Employees' Handbook was sent to every post in May, and the French version was distributed to employees abroad in early July. Arrangements are proceeding for the distribution of the handbook and corrections to spouses. It's hoped the smaller "booklet" format of both handbook and corrections will encourage everyone to keep them handy.

CHANGES IN ABD

Since change is a way of life at External, no one will be surprised to learn of a mini-reorganization in the Personnel Administration Bureau (ABD). With the departure of its Director, the Allowance Policy and Foreign

Service Benefits Division (ABR) has been combined with the Staff Relations and Employee Services Division to form the Staff Relations and Benefits Policy Division (ABS). The FSD Policy Development and Implementation Section has changed its acronym from ABRA to ABSA, and the Travel and Relocation section has joined the Compensation Division as ABMR. The departmental telephone directory should shortly reflect these and other changes.

THE GROWING FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILY

The foreign service family is constantly growing through marriages, births, and adoptions. Enjoyment of these happy events can be enhanced as much by careful preparation as in their pleasurable anticipation.

Be sure to notify your Assignments Section well ahead of time. They will advise you on the necessary procedures (e.g., submission of a Notice of Intent to Marry,

medical examinations, etc.) and tell you how your entitlements under the Directives may be affected. The Assignments Section also issues the amended Posting Confirmation Form (PCF) which authorizes the provision of benefits under the Directives in respect of your new dependants, once clearance is received.

An unofficial PCF amendment can be issued in anticipation of the event, but the provisions of the Directives can take effect no earlier than the date of the birth, adoption or approved marriage as confirmed on receipt of the appropriate legal document(s).

The one exception to the above would be the expenses for medical examinations under FSD 9 to ensure a spouse-to-be (and any dependent children) or a child being adopted is medically fit for life abroad. New boms do not usually require pre-posting medicals. In the October issue, we will be outlining the specific changes in FSD entitlements that occur after a marriage, birth or adoption.