

## ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

## THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

By DR. S. DANA HUBBARD,

Acting Director of Bureau of Public Health Nursing,  
Department of Health, New York City.

A distinctly progressive step in preventive medicine was made when female trained nurses were substituted for male district medical inspectors.

Having been repeatedly held responsible for this innovation, and not without some reason, it is peculiarly fortunate that this opportunity is offered to present the results which have followed the changes made in New York City.

Prior to 1912 in the metropolitan district the field work of the division of contagious diseases was performed entirely by part time medical inspectors, but the constant desire to economize presented a problem which required careful consideration.

The requirements of the field worker consisted in:

As each item was considered carefully it was thought that the work was peculiarly and distinctly a woman's job.

If preventive medicine was to progress only education was required, and what better place to start the program was there than the home, and who could get and hold the mother's ear better than another woman, particularly one having the training and adaptability.

Heretofore it was considered that the only person capable of imparting instruction in medical matters was of necessity a physician.

Field instructors were doctors, all part time men, paid the sum of \$100 per month for a three-hour day's work. To cover the cases from seventeen to thirty inspections had to be made daily. Naturally, under such a plan, it was physically impossible to perform the necessary work of isolation and impart in the given time much of the needed instruction.

As a result violations of quarantine were frequent. Neighboring complaints were numerous, and contagious cases instead of reducing in number actually appeared to increase, even where cases were under supervision. It was obvious that the system was faulty. We were headed up-stream, but our progress was backward.

A change appeared to be necessary. We certainly could not do much worse, and there were possibilities that we might improve.

Accordingly on January 1st, 1913, a budget went into effect providing for district female trained nurses. A group was appointed and ap-