

Question

ANSWER TO QUESTION

The following answer, deposited with the Clerk of the house, is printed in the official report of debates pursuant to standing order 39:

HEALTH AND WELFARE—SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Question No. 449—Mr. Huffman:

What has the Department of National Health and Welfare done in the field of scientific research during the past year?

Answer by: Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):

The scientific research program of the Department of National Health and Welfare for 1955-56 involved a total of \$2,500,000. Of this \$570,000 was made available for intramural medical research, \$205,000 for socioeconomic research in health and welfare, \$1,620,000 for grants under the national health program in aid of medical research and \$105,000 for cancer research sponsored by the national cancer institute of Canada.

INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

The intramural program encompasses those investigations carried on by the various technical and scientific units of the department and in general is aimed at devising new or improved methods of performing the service functions of these units. It refers particularly to detection and assay work, e.g., that associated with the administration of the Food and Drugs Act, and studies of new techniques such as in the control of biological products or the investigation of occupational hazards. Additionally however it may be aimed at gaining new knowledge of public health importance or related to urgent national health problems of a nature not ordinarily undertaken by a single province, university or research institution, concerning which the department may be looked to for leadership and guidance.

Allocations for the intramural research program totalling \$570,000 were distributed as follows: civil aviation medicine division \$2,500; dental health division \$18,000; epidemiology division \$31,000; food and drug directorate \$112,000; laboratory of hygiene \$257,000; nutrition division \$35,000; occupational health division \$114,200.

Throughout the intramural program there is an almost inseparable relationship of research to service function and this makes it difficult to define precisely the proportion of the cost which can properly be designated as research expenditure. In many instances the research is a by-product of the service function. Highlights of the intramural program will illustrate this relationship.

Civil Aviation Medicine

In civil aviation medicine, for example, the principal study involves the practicability of audiometric screening in so far as hearing requirements of airline transport and commercial pilots are concerned. This is aimed at establishing audiometric records to determine hearing deterioration as a result of flight duties and investigating effects of continued exposure to noise in civil aviation pilots. Additionally presently effective standards in hearing are being evaluated. Information obtained from these studies will be used in formulating new standards to be applied in assessing fitness for civil aviation licences.

Dental Health

In the field of dental health, investigations are centred chiefly around water fluoridation and topical fluoride therapy. Continuing studies on the dental effects of water fluoridation, studies on the effectiveness and safety of fluoride compounds and the simplification of techniques of administration of topically applied preventive agents, as well as the effectiveness of such applications, make up the main lines of investigation in this field.

Epidemiology

In the area of epidemiology, an extension of air pollution studies will involve the observation of the effects of air pollutants on a more sensitive population, i.e., persons with cardiac and respiratory disabilities. Continuing studies in infectious diseases will involve the further evaluation of the poliomyelitis vaccination program, as well as the measurement of the protective effect of B.C.G. vaccination against tuberculosis. In addition epidemiologic studies of accidents are being broadened.

Food and Drugs

In the food and drug directorate research projects are conducted in different sections of the laboratory services with the object of providing modern and exact methods of identifying and assaying food and drug products with the highest degree of precision consistent with economy of time, material and effort. Other projects are carried out to provide the directorate with basic knowledge on the action and effects of various constituents on food and drugs for the protection of public health and the prevention of fraud. Numerous basic disciplines are involved in these studies, including pharmacology, physiology, food and organic chemistry, animal pathology and biometrics. These cover a wide variety of individual investigations including toxic residues in foods and beverages, the assay of various drug products and the stability of therapeutic materials.