

The Elderly and Handicapped

As a people we are aging in ever-increasing numbers. Improved living standards, better nutrition, safe drinking water, effective sewage treatment, victory over the era of infectious childhood diseases and near miraculous advances in medical treatment of illness, have all played roles in not only keeping more people living but living longer.

The increase has already begun and will have its most profound impact by the turn of the century, when the percentage of elderly will be nearly double its present rate. Health care planners, including governments, are already trying to grapple with the expected impact and the changes it will spawn in the approach of many issues, ranging from health care to housing of the elderly.

As the percentage of older people rises, the number in need of health care services also rises. While growing old is not always synonymous with growing sick, the fact is the elderly consume a disproportionately higher portion of health care dollars. Most, however healthy at the moment, will eventually require some care.

Besides meeting the needs of the elderly, health care workers are all too familiar with the horrendous toll that today's high speed motorized environment is inflicting on younger people. And because of their capacity to bounce back after what might otherwise be a fatal mishap, thousands of young people are saved through the wonders of intensive care treatment. Many, unfortunately, are left permanently and sometimes severely disabled. Depending on the nature of their disability, patients may require anything from abdominal belts to wheelchairs and washroom aids.

Meeting the needs of disabled and handicapped individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities or at home, is a major challenge to the health care industry in Canada, which has been taken up by many companies. The following paragraphs list a few of these firms and the products they manufacture.

Power wheelchairs are manufactured by Équipement de Transmission (Ind.) Inc. of Ville Vanier, Quebec; chair lifts for stairs, as well as wheelchairs, are produced by Garaventa (Canada) Ltd. of Surrey, British Columbia; and two St-Hyacinthe, Quebec firms, Les Entreprises Elevabec Inc. and Les Escalateurs Atlas (1979) Ltée, also specialize in wheelchairs and wheelchair lifts.

Crestline Coach Limited of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, also manufacture wheelchairs, as well as ambulances and buses for the handicapped.

Calm Handicap Supplies Inc. of Kelowna, British Columbia, produce all types of hospital bed equipment for functional positioning and therapeutic equipment and hospital training dolls.

Med-Ex Diagnostics of Canada Inc., of Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, manufacture rehabilitation chairs, modular therapeutic exercise equipment as well as orthopedic diagnostic exercise apparatus and lower limb artificial prosthetic devices and orthopedic goniometers.

Physical therapeutic and all types of prosthetic and rehabilitation equipment such as traction apparatus, walking aids, arm slings and knee supports, can be supplied by Montreal companies J. Slawner Ltée and Medicus Ltée;

another Montreal manufacturer, Systèmes Médicaux Inc., produces height-adjustable kitchen systems, eating aids for the handicapped and other rehabilitation equipment.

Venco Products Limited of Richmond, British Columbia, manufacture portable bathtubs, whirlpools, therapy apparatus, saunas and vibrating beds, while Whirlteq of Fredericton, New Brunswick, supplies hand-controlled motor vehicles, various types of wheelchair lifts and other equipment including food preparation equipment.

Acme Furniture Ltd. and Westin-Ofa of Canada (1979) Limited both of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Ven-Res Products Limited of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, supply, among other products, orthopedic and geriatric chairs and furniture for waiting rooms and surgeries.

Bard Canada Inc., of Mississauga, Ontario, supply a long list of hospital equipment, ranging from urine and other collection bags, to cannulas, carts, catheters, humidifiers, oxygen masks and tents, sterilization supplies, disposable surgical kits and trays, syringes and stretchers.