

BOOK REVIEWS : BOEKRESENSIES

PROTEIN MALNUTRITION

Malnutrition in African Mothers, Infants and Young Children. Report of the Second Inter-African Conference on Nutrition, held under the auspices of the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) at Fajara, Gambia, 19-27 November 1952. Published August 1954, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office and agents, £1 5s.

This report is the record of a conference held in 1952, under the aegis of the British Government on behalf of the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) at the Medical Research Council's Field Research Laboratory, Fajara, Gambia.

It is welcomed as a source of much valuable reference material but it is regretted that its appearance has been so long delayed. It can very profitably be read in conjunction with the report on the third session of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition.¹ This session was held immediately after the CCTA Conference at Fajara, Gambia, and the members of the Joint Committee all attended the CCTA meetings. It is useful to know that it was in this context that the Joint Committee drew up the definition of 'protein malnutrition' which has had considerable publicity and which in turn became the subject of a conference in Jamaica in November 1953.

The CCTA Conference inevitably revolved around the problem of kwashiorkor and there were sessions covering this and related problems of infant malnutrition on (1) Clinical Features, Demography and Nosography; (2) Pathology; (3) Bio-Chemistry and (4) Dietetics. The final session was held under the title 'Malnutrition in mothers; and treatment and prevention of malnutrition in infants and children'. A section of the report is devoted to terminology and in an appendix compiled by M. Autret 36 names are given which have been used in various parts of the world for protein malnutrition syndromes identical with or closely related to kwashiorkor. In a footnote to this appendix the Editor of the CCTA report comments that the term 'protein malnutrition' might become generally acceptable. The subsequent third session of the Joint Committee proceeded therefore to define the term (page 5, paragraph 2.2).

Another useful appendix in the report is by H. C. Trowell. It includes provisional definitions of severe kwashiorkor and mild kwashiorkor.

In spite of its late appearance this report is a useful reference for those who are interested in problems of protein malnutrition and kwashiorkor, and in the public health approach to widespread malnutrition.

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1. World Health Organization Technical Report Series No. 72, December 1953.