

It is my privilege to report on a year during which the National Cancer Association of South Africa has achieved much more than in any previous 12-month period. Over the past few years the Association has rendered many practical services and has been in such close touch with the public that it has become part of the South African way of life. It is not necessary for me to elaborate on the already well-known objects of the Association, viz. *cancer research, dissemination of information to the medical and allied professions, education of the public, and assistance rendered to cancer patients.*

Cancer must be regarded as a public health problem and therefore a threat to the national welfare; it is a community problem wherever it strikes. It is a truly catastrophic disease from the standpoint of its shattering impact upon the health of the victim, the morale of the patient and his family, and the financial resources of those in average circumstances.

Although cancer has not yet yielded its final secret to the scientist, research has produced much information that is useful in dealing with the disease, particularly in certain of its forms. Such information is placed at the disposal of the medical profession without delay.

Public education activities are designed to alert the public to the threat of cancer and motivate individuals to seek medical advice upon the appearance of signs or symptoms which should be investigated.

The control of cancer depends for its success on an alert and well-educated professional group, a cooperative and informed public, and the availability of adequate diagnostic and therapeutic services.

The Association has appointed three representatives to attend the Eighth International Cancer Congress due to be held in Moscow on 22-28 July 1962. This distinguished assembly of physicians and scientists from many nations of the world will be devoted to the conquest of cancer as one of the most formidable disease problems of our time.

It is appropriate to review in brief the progress made by the National Cancer Association during 1961, reflected more fully in the Annual Report.

Firstly, it is evident from the Report that public opinion in South Africa has been successfully educated to undergo a complete change of heart in its approach to the cancer problem. *Ignorance and fear* have made way for *knowledge* coupled with a sober and healthy approach to the problem. Where cancer formerly was a word to be whispered with awe, it has become a topic freely discussed. No longer do unfortunate cancer sufferers have to bear the added burden of the wholly unjustified stigma that this is a disease of which they should be ashamed. Cancer has become 'ordinary'; in other words, the psychological approach to it has become reasonable.

Professional Activities

So far as the professional activities of the Association are concerned, the *tumour reference panel* has continued to render a fine service in examining and diagnosing difficult or doubtful tumours; *lectures and symposia*, organized in such a

manner that many facets of the diagnosis and treatment of cancer have been brought to general practitioners by highly qualified specialists, have increased in popularity; and the *South African Cancer Bulletin, professional films* and the *medical library service* have continued to be welcomed by the medical profession and medical students. The Cancer Prize of the National Cancer Association has contributed towards interesting medical students in the problem of cancer. Seven travel grants, awarded to doctors to obtain further knowledge and experience overseas, have assisted towards enhancing the already high level of professional medical services available in the Republic.

Public Education

Progress in the field of public education has been most gratifying. Direct and personal contact by means of lectures and film shows was established with 74,799 South Africans—a contact further expanded by the attendance of 366,115 additional citizens, at various showgrounds and exhibitions, who personally visited the Association's exhibits. In addition there was the less personal contact in the form of letters and pamphlets distributed by post, as well as numerous newspaper and magazine articles and radio talks. Little wonder, therefore, that South Africans are becoming one of the most enlightened and knowledgeable peoples of the world in their approach to this very great problem.

Cancer Quackery

Each year reference is made to the problem of cancer quackery. So far as the establishment of sound public knowledge of this matter is concerned, it is probably true to say that the Association has made phenomenal advances in this field. Why then does this problem still remain serious?

I believe the explanation lies in psychological factors rather than in lack of knowledge. An aspect that must be faced is that many relatives feel they must do everything possible—even to the extent of consulting quacks—to save the life of a dear one. But it is a tragedy that such a noble trait is unfortunately exploited by the cancer quack.

The Cancer Association feels the time has arrived for public opinion to rouse the authorities out of their complacency and apathy. Public opinion to-day is very different from public opinion ten years ago. I throw out this challenge to the mass publicity media of press and radio in South Africa: harness the vast opinion-forming resources at your disposal in an effort to bring to the notice of the authorities that the majority of the public no longer wish the cancer quack to be protected.

The Cancer Association will be prepared to brief any member of Parliament who would be prepared to take up this matter in Parliament, to obtain as far as possible available medical, scientific and psychological material inside and outside of the Cancer Association, and to prepare a factual memorandum on the problem of cancer quackery. It will be prepared to draft an anti-quack Bill which, if it were to become law, would place this country in a position of world leadership in this field. Such a project, however, would be costly and time-consuming, and the Association would be hesitant to embark upon it unless it had a reasonable assurance

* Address delivered at the Annual General Meeting of the National Cancer Association of South Africa on 25 June 1962.

that Parliament would adopt such a Bill. This matter is dealt with fully on pages 17 and 18 of the Annual Report.

Assistance to Patients

So far as assistance to cancer patients is concerned, your attention is invited to the fact that during 1961 the Association almost trebled the amount spent on direct and indirect grants to cancer patients.

Finances

The year 1961 closed with a net deficit of R48,376, which had to be met from reserve funds, as against a deficit of R38,092 for 1960. It should be borne in mind that no special appeal for funds was launched during 1961, but there has been a great improvement with regard to spontaneous donations received from the public. The ideal would be for the Association eventually to balance income and expenditure without having to launch special and costly fund-raising appeals. This would mean that all efforts and energies would

continue to be concentrated on carrying out the Association's practical programmes. It is an encouraging sign that more and more firms and individuals are making unsolicited donations. It would be the greatest compliment the public of South Africa could pay the National Cancer Association if it were to increase this spontaneous support to enable the Association to balance its budget. If this ideal is not achieved, the Association will be compelled to launch a national appeal in the near future.

Thanks

In conclusion, I wish to express my personal and sincere appreciation to my colleagues on the Council of Management and those serving on its committees for their support and cooperation during the past year and to record the Association's thanks to the Secretary and staff for their loyal and efficient service in spite of the ever-increasing burden placed upon their shoulders with the great expansion of the Association's activities.