

SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VICTORIAN CYTOLOGY (GYNAECOLOGICAL) SERVICE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1971.

FINANCIAL & STATISTICAL

For the sixth year in succession, the Service has experienced an increased intake of smears. The resultant increase in work load in respect of 1970/71 was financed however, from income which was geared to the previous year's workload. The year under review therefore, saw considerable financial difficulties.

A measure of efficiency able to be related to the use of funds made available almost entirely from Government Grant - no fees are charged in respect of the diagnosed smears - is the average cost of each smear received since the inception of the Service. Maintenance expenditure incurred since the commencement of the Service totalling \$659,838 which, divided by the 634,599 smears similarly received, produces the average cost per diagnosed smear of \$1.04. A useful comparison is possible between our cost of \$1.04 and "the most common fee" of \$7.00 per examination, as set out by the Commonwealth Department of Health in the Medical Benefits Booklet. It is also pertinent to note that in the same book, the Commonwealth Medical Benefit payable in respect of each cervical smear is \$3.30. The cost per smear for the year under review cost an average \$1.135 each.

The financial deficit incurred this year was \$8,969 compared with the previous year's deficit of \$6,805. Whilst total income increased \$16,298 to \$53,098, that is 12%, total expenditure rose by \$21,462 to \$162,067 an increase of 15%.

The wages bill is the largest item of expense and, although the number employed actually decreased comparing this year with last, the expense climbed from \$83,389 to \$105,647. The 27% increase was a result of significant increases under determination of various wages Boards, apart from the flow-on of the 6% national wage increase.

Increases occurred in administration expenses because of the higher intake of smears, increases in the costs of postage and workers compensation and also on account of travelling. The increases were offset in part by a reduction in the value of stocks of stationery. Stocks of medical and surgical items were necessarily reduced similarly to stationery, to continue working within the financial stringencies applied.

DIAGNOSTIC ACTIVITIES:

Two thousand five hundred and forty-six medical practitioners throughout Victoria are now registered with the Service.

From 1st July, 1970, to 30th June, 1971, 137,717 smears were examined. Thus, a total of 634,599 smears have been examined by the Service since its inception. It is gratifying to note that there has been a steady increase in the number of smears being received. This increase has averaged 12% per annum over the past three years.

In the period covered by this report 487 "positive" cases were detected, making a total of 1,977 since the commencement of the Service. As in the past the total number of "positive" cases includes all those cases in which the cell findings were regarded as "strongly suggestive of malignancy" as well as those in which there were "malignant cells identified".

When the above is related to finance it is found that each positive case detected this year cost an average of \$320.97 whilst the average per detected case since inception is \$333.75.

STAFFING:

(a) Medical Staff

In May, 1971, Dr. H.D. Peter Thomson was appointed Deputy Director of the Service. Dr. Thomson has been Assistant Morbid Anatomist and Assistant Cytopathologist, Prince Henry's Hospital since 14th May, 1968. Since joining the staff of Prince Henry's Hospital he has taken part in the work of the Service on a quarter-time basis. He has contributed a great deal to the diagnostic, teaching and developmental activities of the Service.

The Director of the Service, Dr. Michael Drake, spent seven weeks overseas during May and June, 1971. The primary purpose of this overseas trip was to participate in the Fourth International Congress of Cytology which was held in London. At this Congress he was one of a five-member panel which discussed "The Organisation of the Cytology Laboratory". His contribution was based on the work of the V.C.(G) S. and was particularly concerned with the training of the cytotechnologist, continuing education in the cytology laboratory, and the design and equipment of the cytology laboratory. Two other lectures were given. A lecture entitled

"Diagnostic Cytology and the Control of Cancer" was presented at the First Scientific Meeting of the Philippine Society of Pathology in Manila. A lecture on "The Organisation of a Cancer Detection Programme" was given at the Sabbatsberg Hospital, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden.

Cytology centres in Japan, Canada, the United States of America, England and Sweden were visited and discussions held on a number of topics. Particular attention was paid to problems relating to the training of cytopathologists and cytotechnologists, cytology reporting and terminology and progress in the development of automated screening devices. A work-shop dealing with the latter subject was also attended in London.

(b) Technical & Clerical Staff

The staff situation remains a cause for considerable satisfaction. Stability has been achieved, this stability being particularly marked in the most important area, namely, the senior technical positions. The technicians filling these positions are of great importance as they are responsible for the control of the quality of the diagnostic work and for many of the teaching activities of the department.

The married women employed on a part-time basis remain an enthusiastic and energetic group and also show considerable stability. Of the twenty part-time screeners currently employed only two have been with the Service for less than one year whilst nine remain from the first two groups recruited nearly four years ago.

Whilst appreciating the value of this part-time group the need to ensure the availability of "career" cytotechnicians on a long-term basis must not be overlooked. Hence, the Service is currently employing two trainee cytotechnologists both of whom intend completing the five-year part-time course for the Diploma of Medical Laboratory Technology.

At June 30th, 1971, the following staff was employed by the Service:-

Technical Staff:

<u>Full-time</u>	One (1)	Laboratory Manager
	Three (3)	Cytotechnologists
	One (1)	Senior Cytotechnician
	Two (2)	Trainee Cytotechnicians
	Four (4)	Screeners
<u>Part-time</u>	Twenty (20)	Screeners
	Two (2)	Preparation Technicians

Clerical Staff:

<u>Full-time</u>	One (1)	Secretary
	One (1)	Clerical Supervisor
	Six (6)	Clerk/Typists

Data Staff:

<u>Full-time</u>	One (1)	Data Clerk
	One (1)	Senior Key Punch Operator
	Two (2)	Key Punch Operators
<u>Part-time</u>	One (1)	Data Clerk

ACCOMMODATION:

The accommodation continues to be most satisfactory. The large screening areas have been particularly successful and provide adequate space for any increase in technical staff that may be necessary to meet the increasing work-load.

With the cessation of the cytogenetics research programme a small laboratory-office area has become available. This is being used for teaching activities and it is hoped to modify the area slightly to make it more suitable for this purpose.

DATA PROCESSING AND FOLLOW-UP:

Progress continues to be made with the problems relating to the processing of data and the follow-up procedures.

To date over 350,000 records have been put on to punch cards and subsequently transferred to magnetic tape. These comprise the records of all smears received in 1968, 1969 and 1970, most of the "abnormal" smear records, and many of the follow-up records. This tape represents the storage form of the records and will be used for the various analyses of data that will be carried out.

Transfer of the identification data relating to the smears received by the Service in its earlier years of operation, continues. However, this work has been delayed by a shortage of money and hence there are still approximately 200,000 records from 1965 to 1967, inclusive, awaiting processing. As indicated in previous reports, it is essential that this work be done as soon as possible as many of the analyses that will be necessary will depend on access to this early information.

In collaboration with the computer bureau the general design of the data processing systems has been completed.

The computer programmes at present in existence are limited to the formation of tape-files in alphabetical and chronological order and the production of printed listings of the records in these files. Further programmes are being developed and all programmes should be completed by the end of 1971.

The follow-up procedures are operating very well and the response of the members of the medical profession to requests for information has been most gratifying.

The information received does highlight a problem relating to the interpretation of histological material by various pathologists. It is a common belief that when there is a lack of correlation between the histological and cytological findings then the latter must be wrong. This is by no means so. The lack of correlation may be due to inadequate removal or inadequate examination of tissue, or to a lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the changes demonstrated in this tissue. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, examination of tissue sections does provide the only means of confirming cytological results and hence consideration will have to be given to standardising the evaluation of the surgical material. Already tissue sections are obtained whenever possible and reviewed by the pathologists associated with the Service but this activity will need to be extended. Obviously such review must be carried out without reference to the cytological findings to avoid as much as possible the introduction of bias.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME:

Appreciation must again be expressed to the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria for their continued support of the activities of the Service. The fact that the number of women submitting themselves for cytological examination is steadily increasing year by year is an indication of the vigorous educational programme conducted by the Anti-Cancer Council. Public meetings continue to be held with various women's groups and these meetings are addressed by one of a group of twelve women doctors who work with the Anti-Cancer Council on a part-time basis. A film, made partly in the laboratories of the V.C. (G) S., will shortly be used at these meetings. The women attending the meetings are informed of the advantages of cytological testing for cervical cancer and also of self-examination for cancer of the breast.

A short film emphasising the value of cytological examination, and a second film urging women to present regularly for re-examination, have been shown on television channels. It is of interest to note that the first film was chosen as one of the ten best films of its type in the world and indeed was the only one so chosen from countries other than North America. The film is now being circulated to all countries belonging to the International Union Against Cancer.

RESEARCH:

Unfortunately the establishment of a research programme has not yet been possible. The major barrier to any investigational work is the heavy commitment of the senior technical staff to the diagnostic work of the Service and, in particular, to the lack of Specialist Pathologist time. However, considerable progress has been made in the sorting of material and assessment of its suitability for further study. As indicated previously little progress will be possible until the information to be yielded by the electronic processing of the data is available for study.

TEACHING:

The training of cytotechnicians continues to be an important activity of the "School of Cytotechnology" formed by the combined laboratories of the V.C.(G) S. and Prince Henry's Hospital. Its activities are attracting the attention of interstate and overseas hospitals and there have been a number of requests for training in cytology. This would appear to be an area in which the Service can make a very important contribution to cancer control and, at the same time, increase the skill and motivation of its own technical staff.

ASSISTANCE FROM AUXILIARIES:

For some years now members of the Prince Henry's Hospital Auxiliaries have packed the kits of materials that are sent to the medical practitioners who use the Service. A group, averaging four women, has spent several hours every week carrying out this task. The help they have given has relieved the pressure on the clerical staff and has saved the Service a great deal of money. This help is appreciated very much indeed.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:

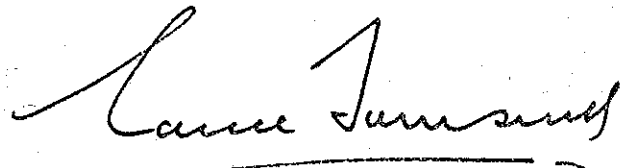
It is with regret that we record the death of Dr. *E. V.* Keogh on 30th September, 1971. Dr. Keogh was a member of the Board, having been one of the two representatives of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria since the inception of the Service. He retired as Director of the Anti-Cancer Council in August, 1968. The fine record of service rendered by Dr. Keogh in medical research and also with the Anti-Cancer Council will be long remembered by those who were privileged to know him.

Dr. G.R. Kurrle found it necessary to give up his place on the Board of Management during the year and appreciation is recorded for his assistance.

We have been pleased to welcome two new members to fill the vacancies. Dr. Nigel Gray was nominated by the Anti-Cancer Council, he being the Director of the Victorian Council. Dr. R. Motteram, Director of Pathology at the Cancer Institute Board is the second new member. We extend a warm welcome to these two and look forward to a long and fruitful association in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION:

The dedication and loyalty of the Director, Dr. M. Drake and the staff of the Service have been outstanding factors in the fine achievements produced during a year beset with financial difficulties. There is no doubt that the long term goals of the Service will be brought closer to fruition if adequate tangible support is forthcoming. The hope is expressed that such adequate financial resources are made available to allow the Service to continue making a significant contribution toward the fight against cancer in women throughout Victoria.



Lance Townsend
Chairman



W.A. Cross
Manager & Secretary