AN ANALYSIS OF EXISTING TYPES OF SMALL-PLANT HEALTH SERVICES IN NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

R. B. O'CONNOR, M.D.
BOSTON

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

IT HAS LONG been known that small industries and their workers have qualitatively the same need for an industrial health program as do large industries and their workers. However, quantitatively the need is obviously much less, and the range of medical problems may be less. Thus the reason for the delay in the development of effective health programs in small plants has been the difficulty of developing such programs with less than full time medical personnel. In the smaller plants their medical needs and their available budgets may not justify full time physicians and nurses.

If large plants spend up to $25 per year per employee for their industrial health program, they must feel it is worth the expense. If an effective medical program can be developed for a small plant on the same per capita basis as in the large plant, the investment should be equally justifiable. Such programs have been and are being developed, and in many instances where figures are available, the returns on the investment have reached amazingly happy proportions. Indeed, the returns are such that one wonders why managements and workers continue blissfully to lose money every day they continue without a real medical program.

The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the methods, presently in use, of furnishing health services to small industry in Northeastern United States that have proved to be effective and the pitfalls that limit program effectiveness that must be avoided.

FOUR ELEMENTS VITAL TO PROGRAM SUCCESS

Experience with this problem over a period of years has permitted crystallization of certain elements that can be considered vital if the small plant program is to be really effective. In programs that have worked well, these elements have been present. In programs that have not worked well or have not reached maximum effectiveness, some or all of these elements have been missing.

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT INTEREST IN INDUSTRIAL HEALTH

The first important requisite is an interest in industrial health on the part of the medical personnel. This may seem obvious, and yet it has been one of the commonest reasons why many medical programs in small plants have failed to reach

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Assistant Professor of Industrial Medicine, Harvard School of Public Health; Division Medical Director, Liberty Mutual Insurance Company.