

Closing of TB Sanatorium Hailed as a Victory Symbol

Patient-Care Facilities at Trudeau to End but Disease Is Far From Under Control

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Realization that medical science and improved standards of living are slowly but surely conquering one of mankind's most devastating diseases came sharply to this world-famous tuberculosis center last week with the announcement that the Trudeau Sanatorium will close its patient-care facilities on Dec. 1.

Founded in 1884 as the Adirondack Cottage Sanatorium by Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, who himself had tuberculosis, the Trudeau Sanatorium, renamed upon his death in 1915, is the nation's oldest private institution for the treatment of this disease.

The Trudeau-Saranac Institute, which has operated the sanatorium, will continue and increase its research activities in tuberculosis and other chest diseases, particularly of industrial origin, such as silicosis, asbestosis, beryllium poisoning and lung cancer.

Gave Care to Over 12,000

The decision to close the seventy-year-old institution, which has given care to over 12,000 patients, has a significance for this community beyond the effect on its economic future. Nearly one-third, and at one time one-half, of the 6,700 residents originally came here because of personal health problems, primarily tuberculosis. Once having "taken the cure" successfully, they built their lives and their community around this disease.

They have closely followed and observed personally the changing picture of the tuberculosis problem. These changes have included earlier case finding, improved diagnosis and the successive introduction, starting in 1944, of streptomycin, para-amino salicylic acid and isoniazid in the treatment of the disease. They have seen the sanatorium stays shortened, Government tuberculosis facilities enlarged and home and office treatment by private physicians increased. The decision to close the sanatorium

came as no surprise to them and others who have followed the steady advances made in tuberculosis control in this country.

Recognizing that these advances meant a decline in the cottage-cure type of treatment, which has characterized this area, the Saranac Lake Rehabilitation Guild started broadening its services several years ago.

Originally founded in 1936 to provide educational and diversional activities for tuberculous patients in the sanatorium and cottages in the community, the guild has added physical and occupational therapy and vocational counseling services and now offers a complete rehabilitation service for patients with practically all types of physical disabilities. The guild now serves 100 patients each day.

The Trudeau trustees are appointing a special committee to study the possibilities of using the sanatorium's facilities, consisting of over fifty buildings on a 100-acre plot, for other health purposes.

Philosophy Is Summarized

On the grounds overlooking the Adirondacks is a bronze statue of Dr. Trudeau, who not only founded the sanatorium but who helped to organize and served as the first president of the National Tuberculosis Association fifty years ago. A true physician who practiced the art as well as the science of medicine, Dr. Trudeau's philosophy is summarized in the inscription at its base: "To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to console always."

However, an even greater monument to this leader in man's fight against tuberculosis was last week's announcement, for that which he built was built so well that it accomplished its purpose.

The closing of the Trudeau Sanatorium is a symbol of victory in one phase, but only one phase,

of tuberculosis control. When Dr. Trudeau died in 1915 at the age of 68, the tuberculosis mortality rate in the United States was 140 deaths for each 100,000 population. In 1953, it had dropped to 12.6.

This achievement, unlike some developments in medicine, did not result from the work of a single individual or any one dramatic discovery. Many methods and many individuals have played significant roles.

Public Has Played Vital Role

The public also has played a vital role. It has learned about the value of regular chest X-ray examinations. It has made possible, through its support of Federal and state public health services and the National Tuberculosis Association, the early case finding, research, improved facilities and rehabilitation services that have brought about a decline in the disease.

The end of this one phase of tuberculosis control does not mean a diminishing of the need for increased emphasis on the other phases. In fact, it points up dramatically that, through increased efforts, we can expect even greater results.

Today, there are still some 400,000 Americans with active tuberculosis, and over 20,000 persons die each year of the disease. Even though the necessity for sanatorium beds has markedly decreased, the need for preventive measures, research and professional and public education in tuberculosis must continue if a final victory is to be attained.