

History and Progress of Physical Therapy in Severance Hospital

Although physical therapists have been in and out of Korea with the Armed Forces since 1946, it was not until 1949 that physical therapy really came to stay. The Woman's Division of Christian Service sent out the first physical therapist in that year to work in Severance Hospital. The Methodist Mission also provided the first patient in the person of Miss Kate Cooper who was suffering from an ankle injury.

The work of the therapist from Dec. 1949 until the coming of the Korean war was that of selling the program to the doctors. Progress was slow but sure. Before too long, heat, massage and exercises were being given to a number of patients, and the seeds were sown regarding prevention of deformities, early treatment, etc.

From June 25, 1950 until November of 1951 the progress of the program was temporarily interrupted. In November of 1951 work was resumed--this time at the Presbyterian Hospital in Chunju. Here the facilities were expanded to include a home-made whirlpool which added variety to the program.

By July of 1952 work was reopened in Severance Hospital in Seoul. In a short time facilities were again expanded to include the beginnings of work with cerebral palsy cases, post polios and others.

In the same year added impetus was given by the opening of the Church World Service Amputee Project. Each patient who came for help was seen by our department, either before fitting in order to prepare him for a prosthesis, or after fitting to provide training in its use.

In much the same way the establishment of the Post Polio clinic channeled more and more patients through our department. Diagnosis was the first step, and then physical therapy provided the necessary training in physical rehabilitation.

In 1959 the services for crippled children were expanded to include the establishment of a home for 25 crippled children. This in turn necessitated an expansion of our services to include their treatment.

We have grown from a very small department of one room, equipped with one heat lamp and a pair of hands, to a large, modern department equipped to give light therapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, massage and exercise. In August of this past year we moved into our new hospital. We are very grateful to the Woman's Division of Christian Service for the many pieces of new equipment they have given. The whirlpools, the ultra-sound, the heat lamps and the exercise equipment are all being put to good use. Our latest addition in the way of treatment facilities is a beautiful treatment pool given to us by the International Rotary Club of Seoul. It was finished soon after we moved into the new building and was dedicated in November. During our many stages of development much of our equipment has been made locally with modifications for use here.

Since 1951, sixteen girls have had some training in our department. At present we have a staff of 7 Korean therapists, Marion Current of the Canadian Mission who joined us in the winter of 1960, and myself. In addition we have three young men who work in our department.

These past 13 years have shown tremendous advances in the field of physical therapy in Korea and in our own department. For example, we gave approximately 400 treatments during our first full year of operation, and over 19,500 treatments in 1959. Although the number of treatments has decreased since that time, we feel it has been due in part to the fact that other hospitals in the city have opened departments of physical therapy. Three of these are administered by girls who have received training in our department. Another and more significant reason, we hope, is that patients are receiving better care and that our services are used for early treatment rather than as a matter of last resort.

It is our hope that our workers might all be filled with the Compassion of Christ, and that through this special ministry of healing, many in this land might be brought to a saving knowledge of Him.

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