

The Red Cross

Author(s): Clara D. Noyes

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THE RED CROSS

IN CHARGE OF

JANE A. DELANO, R.N.

Director, Department of Nursing

MEETING THE SPANISH INFLUENZA SITUATION

With the appropriation by the Red Cross War Council of \$575,000.00, to be used in combating the epidemic of Spanish influenza that has been ravaging the Atlantic seaboard, it became necessary to develop a plan for meeting the general situation over the entire country.

A special committee, representing the American Red Cross and the Federal Public Health Service, was appointed to outline a general plan of coöperation between the two organizations. The director of the Department of Nursing was a member of this committee.

Definite instructions were, at once, sent to Division Headquarters for transmission to all Red Cross Chapters, suggesting various methods of meeting the epidemic situation.

The fund appropriated was made available for nursing service and for emergency hospital supplies, when local authorities were unable to meet the situation requested through the Federal Public Health Service. Chapters were instructed to refer all requests for nursing personnel to the Federal Public Health Service representative, in order that the distribution of nurses might be made nationally in as equitable a manner as possible. Chapters were urged to develop to the utmost their own local resources.

Chapters were also urged not to go out of their own locality for nursing personnel, except with the approval of Division offices, and Division headquarters were instructed not to call on other divisions for assistance without approval from Red Cross headquarters. This was done to prevent unequal distribution of nurses.

Recruiting headquarters were suggested where all nursing personnel, including graduates, undergraduates, nurses' aids and volunteers, could be listed and distributed as needed, locally.

A standard schedule of prices was approved by the Federal Public Service, the Surgeon General of the Army and the American Red Cross, in order that one organization should not bid against the other, and to prevent one state from securing nursing personnel at the expense of an adjoining state, equally in need. Another reason for this decision was that it seemed unfair to the 20,000 nurses, who had already accepted war service at the standard rate of \$60.00 a month in

this country, and who were also in the cantonment hospitals battling with the epidemic and giving their lives in the service.

It is, however, to the credit of the nurses of the country, that, in our first appeal, before an appropriation for this work had been made, over 1500 nurses responded without any inquiries, so far as we know, in regard to the compensation which they might expect. This is typical of the spirit of the nurses of America, and will always be remembered by those of us who have tried to meet conditions unparalleled in the history of the country, as a splendid evidence of their loyalty and unselfish devotion.

Not only have our own nurses responded to the call, but, in the very beginning of the epidemic, Canadian nurses came to the assistance of the New England states, and many of them are now working side by side with our own nurses in an effort to control the epidemic as well as in our cantonments and hospitals

Every effort was made to appeal strongly through the public press for the service needed, and every Red Cross Chapter was urged to neglect no method that would help to meet the need.

Home Defense nurses have responded quickly, and it has been necessary to rely largely upon them, as hundreds of nurses were holding themselves available for foreign service, and it seemed undesirable to place them where they might not be easily available as sailings are secured.

The burden which has fallen upon the Red Cross Nursing Service has included, not only the needs of the Army and Navy, but the demands have been equally great from munition and ship-building plants, and other essential war industries. The civilian hospitals have also turned to us for assistance and, whenever possible, nurses and volunteers have been assigned to duty.

Our Division offices have been overwhelmed with demands but, due to the pressure of work, it has been impossible, as yet, to secure complete reports of their accomplishments.

The situation in Washington is, possibly, typical of other communities, and the following description of the plan adopted here may be helpful.

Washington was fortunate in the fact that the influenza did not reach the District of Columbia until a few days after its development in more northern places, so that before it made great headway, we were able to develop a central organization of the public health nursing resources of the District. Mary E. Lent, inspector of nursing for the cantonment zones, was recalled to Washington, and coöperated with Elizabeth A. Fox, director of the Red Cross Bureau of Public Health Nursing, in organizing the central visiting nurses' associa-

tion. A central headquarters was established and placed in charge of a chief nurse representing the Federal Public Health Service and the American Red Cross. Louise Boyd was released by the National Organization of Public Health Nursing to take charge of this work.

At the same time, a recruiting center in a prominent part of the business section was established and placed in charge of a Red Cross nurse, with sufficient assistance to meet the need. Telephones were promptly established, and motor service organized. Fannie E. Clement, former director of the Town and Country Public Health Service, was put in charge of the recruiting station.

No attempt was made to supply special nurses to individual patients, but all calls from private houses were referred to the Public Health Nursing headquarters, rich and poor alike sharing in their ministrations.

The city was districted, and a nurse placed in charge of each district, with a district kitchen upon which she could call for suitable hot food for patients in rooming houses, where it was impossible for them to be supplied.

A motor service was organized for the transportation of nurses and such food. Requests were sent out for the loan of thermos bottles.

Advertisements were placed in the local papers, indicating the types of volunteers desired. As the schools were closed, by order of the Department of Education, the teachers were asked to volunteer as assistants either to the nurses or for such clerical services as might be needed. The Chapter also developed a special group of workers for the care of children, and housekeepers, in homes where the needs were greatest.

To further meet the local conditions, arrangements were made, October 3, to open a temporary hospital for the use of war workers, ill of Spanish influenza and pneumonia, and five days later, the hospital was opened, completely equipped to meet the situation which threatened to stop Government machinery. Provisions were made in the hospital for 100 beds to start with, the plan to be extended as necessary.

Miss R. Inde Albaugh, a Red Cross nurse of Connecticut, assisted in the work of organization, and Lucy Minnigerode was appointed temporary supervisor. The Red Cross supplies the nursing personnel and equipment, and the hospital at this writing is in full swing to care for sick war workers. The close proximity of Washington to many of the large camps, and the fact that Washington civilian hospitals were over-crowded and in many cases not large enough to care for its increased population, made this hospital the answer to an imperative need.

In addition to the nurses assigned through the Bureau of Field Service, ten public health nurses have been assigned by Miss Fox, through the Bureau of Public Health Nursing. They were sent to North Carolina, South Carolina and Alabama.

ASSIGNMENT OF NURSES THROUGH THE BUREAU OF FIELD SERVICE

BY CLARA D. NOYES, R.N.

The first call for nurses to meet the epidemic of Spanish influenza that swept with such rapidity from the Canadian border as far south as Norfolk, reached Red Cross headquarters September 14. It came from the Public Health Service of Massachusetts, and requested that fifteen trained nurses be sent immediately to the Quarantine Station in the Boston Harbor. These were on their way a few hours after the call came. The situation in Massachusetts, where the epidemic apparently started, quickly became acute, spreading to the cantonments, ship-building and munitions plants.

The necessity for continuing to assign nurses to military duty, both in France and in the cantonments, where the crowded conditions produce an appalling condition, threw the responsibility of service in this emergency almost entirely on the Home Defense nurses. All Divisions were notified to report the number of Home Defense nurses enrolled and those ready for immediate duty, and to keep headquarters informed of the number assigned. They were also advised, before calling on headquarters, to use all possible local nursing resources.

Hundreds of telegrams were sent to enrolled Red Cross nurses asking them to hasten the date of their availability for military service. The response from nurses was quite remarkable, and since that time, papers of nurses have been sent to the War Department, at the rate of about ninety a day, the majority of them immediately available for service. It was felt that if military needs in cantonments could be met by nurses enrolled for active service, the Home Defense nurses sent in the early days of the epidemic could be withdrawn for civilian needs.

The reports from the Divisions showed a total of 2456 Home Defense nurses enrolled in all divisions. The report of assignments, by no means complete, showed 1253 nurses in the field. A total of 448 nurses were assigned to the New England Division. Two hundred of these were supplied from the outside, between twenty-five and fifty being Canadian nurses, who volunteered before the epidemic spread so alarmingly through Canada that no more help could be expected from that point.

At Camp Devens, the first camp, so far as we know, where the

disease made rapid headway, forty-eight of the nurses supplied by the Red Cross became ill. The Army immediately hurried nurses to this post, withdrawing them from other cantonments. As nurses from the Army reached the cantonments, those supplied by the Red Cross were withdrawn and placed elsewhere. Colored Red Cross nurses were called into service, and were used in many places where the demand for graduate nurses existed, such as Newport News, where four colored nurses were assigned to duty at the request of local authorities.

The opening of temporary hospitals all over the country, to meet the situation, brought calls for nursing personnel, which were supplied as quickly as possible.

The situation in the powder, ship-building and munition plants kept pace with that in the camps and, although incomplete as to actual assignments, the reports show that nurses were supplied to the Emergency Fleet Corporation, Philadelphia, to Hopewell, Va., Fore River, Quincy, Mass., Bristol, Chester, Old Hickory Powder Plant, Nashville, Tenn., Dupont Company, and many other large and small essential war industries.

The need for nurses in the civilian hospitals was also great and was supplied as far as possible.

Reports have been received from Divisions showing that the epidemic has spread as far west as the Pacific coast. Nurses have been assigned to American Lake, Camp Kearney, Cal., Flagstaff and Winslow, Arizona, and elsewhere through the west.

The Central Division has performed an unusual amount of work, giving great credit to the organizing ability of the Division Director. Since the epidemic started in the Division,—which includes the states, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois, over 900 nurses and aids have been assigned to meet military and civilian needs. Two hundred and seven were sent to Camp Dodge, alone. These are now being withdrawn to meet the civilian needs.

In no epidemic of which we have knowledge, have the nurses been so subject to infection. Hundreds have fallen ill, but we are glad to be able to say that the nurses generally have recognized that the work is of equal importance with that being done by the nurses in France, worthy of the greatest sacrifice it is in their power to give, and have not hesitated to make it.

The routine work at National Headquarters is continuing without interruption. The Greek unit, reported ready in the last number of the *JOURNAL*, has sailed. An interesting unit is now being organized, composed of Czecho-Slovak nurses and nurses' aides, and will sail in the near future. The latter are now being prepared under the auspices of the Red Cross.