

BOOK NOTICE

Rheumatic Fever

In observance of National Heart Week, the Public Affairs Committee, Inc., has issued *Rheumatic Fever—Childhood's Greatest Enemy*, by Herbert Yahraes, the most comprehensive and readable pamphlet yet written on the disease that cripples and destroys more children of school age than any other disease, and that affects more than a million persons, young and old, in the United States.

"This booklet," according to Dr. David D. Rutstein, Medical Director of the American Heart Association, "represents a major step forward in bringing the essential facts concerning rheumatic fever before the American public. Rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease constitute one of our country's most pressing public health problems. Science is making progress in combating this disease which takes so many young lives and which attacked more than 40,000 members of the armed forces during World War II. It is the responsibility of every citizen to know the facts about rheumatic fever and to understand the tremendous need for community rheumatic fever programs in order to bring available knowledge within the reach of all sufferers from the disease."

The 32-page, illustrated Public Affairs Pamphlet contains all "the essential facts concerning rheumatic fever" and points to the need for community action on a broad scale. It was prepared by the Public Affairs Committee in cooperation with the American Council on Rheumatic Fever of the American Heart Association in order to provide needed public information on the disease as background for National Heart Week. The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, Rotary International, Kiwanis International, and other organizations are cooperating in the national effort to stimulate public interest in the problems of heart disease, the greatest cause of death in the United States.

"Diagnosis of rheumatic fever is so difficult and treatment so complex and expensive," the pamphlet declares, "that medical men who have studied the disease most carefully say it can be fought successfully only by a public health program like the one that has been waged successfully against tuberculosis."

"Many different services are needed by the average rheumatic fever family," Mr. Yahraes points out, "and ideally they should be available in every community. They should be brought together by some central agency, perhaps the Department of Health, which would keep a register of cases as they were reported by private and school doctors and by welfare workers, and also a record of all the community facilities that might be of assistance."

"Within the last decade," according to the pamphlet, "considerable progress has been made in working out cooperation between the federal and state governments for financing public programs for the care of RF children. Federal money for that purpose was first set aside in 1939, when Congress authorized the Children's Bureau to include rheumatic children in the crippled children's program. This is financed by the national government under the special grant-in-aid provisions of the Social Security Act."

"The first joint federal-state program—Oklahoma's—was approved by the Children's Bureau in 1940. By 1947 there were twenty such programs, and a dozen others were being planned."

The London County Council's Rheumatism Scheme, which got under way in 1926, is described in the pamphlet as an example of a successful community plan. As a result of this cooperative effort in England by school and health authorities, by private and by public institutions, the incidence of acquired heart disease among London school children dropped from 2 per cent to 0.8 per cent in ten years, and there was a considerable decrease in the number of chronic cardiac invalids. In carrying out this scheme, London provided one hospital bed for every 550 school children. The ratio in New York City is only a fourth or fifth as high.

Rheumatic Fever—Childhood's Greatest Enemy, by Herbert Yahraes, is Pamphlet No. 126 in the series of popular, factual, ten-cent pamphlets issued by the Public Affairs Committee, Inc., non-profit educational organization, at 22 East 38th Street, New York 16, N. Y.