



President's Message

By Monroe T. Morgan, Dr. P.H.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MANPOWER

What would you do if you were on an operating table ready to undergo major surgery and you asked the person who is about to perform the surgery, "What are your qualifications for performing surgery?" and he answered, "I majored in biology but decided to go into the business of performing operations after taking a ten-week short course in surgery"? How would you react if you were seated in a chair to have a large cavity filled and you asked the person who is to fill the cavity, "What are your qualifications?" and he answered, "I majored in business in college, but I like to fill teeth so I started practicing dentistry"? How would you feel if you were in the hospital and asked the nurse, "What are your qualifications?" and she answered, "I majored in secretarial science but after graduation I couldn't get a job as a secretary and started working here as a nurse"?

Further, what would you think if you asked these people if they belong to the appropriate state and national associations such as the American Medical Association, American Dental Society, and American League of Nursing and they replied that they did not belong to these associations? How would you react if they further stated that they did not see fit to read the appropriate journals to learn the newest information on the state of the art of their profession? How would you receive it if they said they did not see the need to go to state and national educational conferences to share knowledge in order that they might better prepare themselves to practice their chosen profession? Would you be concerned if they said they did not see any need to support continuing education or any need for reading the results of research in order to better treat their patient?

More than likely you would be fearful that the above-mentioned "professionals" did not possess the esoteric body of knowledge (one of the eight requirements

of a professional) appropriate to that area of practice. Hence you probably would not have confidence in them and would not let them have you as a patient. Just as the three above-mentioned professions have an esoteric body of knowledge, so does the practice of environmental health. Knowledge necessary for practicing environmental health is very broad and very comprehensive as is the body of knowledge for medicine, dentistry, and nursing.

Fortunately the time has come in our profession when there is an almost adequate supply of properly prepared environmental health manpower. Tom Allen, R.S., M.S.E.H., Ohio, did a study in which he gathered information concerning the schools in the United States offering training in environmental health. Many of the statistics that I use are from Mr. Allen's study. The questionnaire containing 50 questions was mailed to the 78 institutions that claimed to offer programs in environmental health. Only 61 institutions returned the questionnaire. Of these 61 only 48 offered some type of environmental health education. Ten institutions said they did not have programs and three said they were in the process of establishing programs. Only six of the programs were professionally accredited.

The survey revealed that in 1973 over 445 students received baccalaureate degrees in environmental health in the United States. It is interesting to note that in 1973 there were 1,773 students enrolled in environmental health baccalaureate degree programs. During the 23 years prior to 1954, there had been only 474 students graduating from "sanitary science" programs.

Our concern is not treating man as the "patient." It is more important than that. It is treating man's *oikos* (man's house, man's home) which is commonly called man's environment. I need not define environment because it is everything that can affect man both favorably and

detrimentally. We sanitarians and environmentalists assist man by managing his home. Thus if we do a good job of managing man's home, we reduce the chance that he will deviate from good health and require restorative care (curative medicine). We readily appreciate that if one is to manage man's home, he must have a good knowledge of the environment (his patient).

The environmentalist is expected to be an educator in all aspects of his work and to render correct and just decisions. Further he is expected to interpret laws and legal procedures firmly, tactfully, and impartially. He is expected to be knowledgeable and helpful in alleviating a multitude of problems that may or may not have a direct or indirect relation to the community's physical, economical, political, educational, social, and mental problems.

Even though we have not met the annual need for environmental health manpower, we are much better off than we have been in the past. An analysis of the situation makes one feel good. One realizes that in the not too distant future there will be an adequate supply of properly trained environmental health people and they will be professionals supporting their state and national organizations, as well as being extremely proud of their profession. Mr. Allen's survey indicates that the environmental health graduates will see the need to continue their education. The study indicated that these young men and women realize that after receiving the bachelor's degree in environmental health (B.S.E.H.), their academic learning should have just begun.

My experience with the environmental health majors indicates that they have a

sincere desire to be professional environmentalists and they will strongly support their profession by supporting the local, state, and national associations. Also, I realize a desire on the part of these young people to preserve health, restore the environment, and improve the quality of life. Rather than ask what can the associations do for me, these young people seem to be asking how can I be an asset to my profession and the associations because one should be competent in his work and revere his profession.

During early times when a ship was lost at sea, the two most important needs were wind for the sails and a lighthouse. So during these present troubled times, let's dedicate ourselves to seeing that environmental health practice is the "wind for the sails" and that sanitarians and environmentalists are the "light of the lighthouse."

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Ben Mathews, chairman of the Disasters Committee, requests samples of disaster plans for a variety of situations—earthquake, flood, hurricane, severe cold and snow, tornado, or other. In developing recommendations the committee needs suggestions for the problems of food, water supply, waste disposal, disposal of the dead, shelter sanitation and related problems. Please send materials to:

**Ben Mathews, NEHA Disasters Comm.
Alameda Co. Health Care Services Agency
Emergency Medical Services
499 Fifth Street
Oakland, Calif. 94607**

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Committees omitted from last issue—below.

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