

Health Science Library Seen as Important Tool

An important new tool for use by the state's medical community and significant to the health of the people is being established in Anchorage, thanks to cooperative efforts of private and federal groups.

Under provisions of Public Law 89-239, through which Regional Medical Programs are instituted, a grant was made to help develop a Health Sciences Library in Alaska.

It is a unique application of the program's objective to establish more effective links between the advancing frontier of medical knowledge and the world of medical practice, and to assure speedy delivery of the benefits of new knowledge to consumers of medical services in all parts of Washington state and Alaska.

Improved patient care is one of the immediate and direct benefits.

It is through RMP also that the Anchorage Cobalt Center is

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Health Science Library . . .

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coming into being. And like the Cobalt Center, the library, too, is a community project, joining efforts of private health professionals and the U.S. Public Health Service.

A library advisory committee has been formed to represent community interests. Active community interest is also manifest in donations from private physicians. These gifts include both money and valuable medical books.

Dr. Frederick J. Hillman as chairman and Dr. Alan Homy are the Advisory Committee representatives from the Anchorage Medical Society. The Alaska State Medical Association members are Dr. Gary Walkup of Fairbanks and Dr. Arthur N. Wilson, Jr. of Ketchikan.

The U.S. Public Health Service is represented by Dr. C. Edwin Martin, assistant chief of medicine at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage and Dr. Charles Neilson, Deputy Director Alaska Area Native Health Service.

One of the staunchest advocates of the Health Sciences Library and one who worked many hours with other interested persons to plan the project is Dr. M. Walter Johnson, Clinical Director of the PHS Medical Center and a long-time resident of the state. He was named Project Director by RMP.

Mrs. Ursula Strash, who has ten years experience in research librarian work and background of extensive education in the field, is librarian for the new facility.

She is responsible for the basic planning for the Anchorage facility and medical library service for the whole state of Alaska, a unique undertaking. She is assisted by Mrs. Christine Schaedler, a former teacher.

Mrs. Strash reports that even in the library's founding stages since last July, the response from physicians requesting service has been overwhelming.

The USPHS is providing space for the facility in its Alaska Area Native Health Service building adjacent to the Medical Center at Third Avenue and Gambell Street.

PHS also supports the project by furnishing the librarians salary, equipment and supplies, binding of back volumes of medical journals and monographs and subscriptions to most of the major medical journals.

There are some 230 of these, mostly monthlies, and they include British, Canadian and Scandinavian publications.

One of the newest on the medical scene is the "Journal of Toxicology," a subject of growing importance to the medical field as drug abuses become more prominent and new chemical products emerge from expanding technology.

Included in the collection of bound journals of the library are most volumes of the American Journal of Diseases in Children and an entire set of Pediatrics.

As funds permit, the library will acquire a good basic collection of books in the health related sciences. The grant provides for an assistant librarian, basic furniture and copying equipment to furnish requested information to physicians.

The Alaska Health Sciences Library, which has been giving service to physicians in the state even as it readies for a formal opening early in 1969, will have a dual function.

It will be the community medical library for the entire Anchorage area. As such, it provides services to all professional health workers residing here and will initiate a program of shared professional services with smaller Anchorage medical libraries which do not have trained personnel.

In its larger role, the library will give library services to all physicians, dentists and allied health personnel in Alaska.

Through the Alaskan facility's close association with the Northwest Regional Medical Library, Alaskan doctors, regardless of their isolation, will come nearer to having good services and current literature which is available in the largest medical centers.

A vital part of the Alaska library's value is its relation to a national network of libraries. At the center of the network is the National Library of Medicine, the world's most comprehensive, assisted by several large regional resource libraries.

These are not yet established in all regions, but the one serving Alaska, at the University of Washington, was one of the first to be effectual.

The library project will receive about \$30,000 in grant monies, two thirds of which are for the first of two grant years which end January 31, 1970.