

bedrooms is provided by screens or curtains. Nurses' systems are installed in each room. Bath and toilet facilities are conveniently located, and in some facilities lavatories are provided in each bedroom to encourage self-care. Each nursing unit has a station, and a separate consultation and treatment room is provided for use by physicians. Physical therapy equipment—in the treatment of certain long-term conditions and disabilities—is frequently available. Construction of this new type of home is going on at an increasing pace throughout the country. In general, nursing homes have tended to be small, averaging about 40 beds in 1961 in all nongovernmental facilities.³ (Governmental—Federal, State, and local—are much larger, on the average, than homes under proprietary or private nonprofit auspices. A survey conducted during April–June 1963, showed that government nursing homes having nursing care as the primary type of service had an average of 125 beds.)⁴ Homes constructed during recent years are somewhat larger than older facilities. An inventory conducted in 1954 gave the average size of nongovernmental homes as 40 beds. A 1965 survey by the American Nursing Home Association showed that nursing homes now have an average size of about 40

Services Rendered

To appraise the services provided in nursing home facilities, it is important to have some knowledge of the people they serve. A survey estimate indicates that there are approximately 500,000 persons in nursing homes at the present time. The very elderly are a large part; a number of studies have indicated that the average age (median) is about 80 years. While cardiovascular diseases are the largest single cause of disability among nursing home patients, senility and fractures (especially of the hip) are among the most frequent causes. Although various studies differ as to the relative number of nursing home patients who are ambulatory, alert, or confused, all agree that a substantial proportion (at least one-fifth) can walk unassisted; from 10 to 20 percent are bedfast; perhaps half are confused part or most of the time.

To prevent the mental and physical deterioration to which so many nursing home patients are prone requires continuing care and attention. It would be expected that, above all, nursing care should constitute the primary service. In terms of personnel to provide nursing care, many homes still have licensed practical nurses as their highest nursing-skill level. A 1961 inventory conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service indicated that among nearly 10,000 non-profit nursing homes 39 percent had full-time licensed practical nurses only; 29 percent had full-time registered professional nurses; 18 percent had both full-time professional nurses and licensed practical nurses; but 13 percent had neither full-time registered professional nor licensed practical nurses. Many of the homes, however, have the part-time services of registered professional nurses and

³ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, Division of Hospital and Health Facilities. *Characteristics of Nursing Homes and Related Facilities: Report of a 1961 Nationwide Survey*. PHS Publication No. 930-F-5, 1963, p. 14.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Public Health Service. National Center for Health Statistics. *Characteristics of Residents in Institutions for the Aged and Chronically Ill*, Series 12, No. 2, 1965. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., table A, p. 3.

⁵ American Nursing Home Association. News release, Washington, D.C., Dec. 29, 1965.