

Now, this has, we believe, led to much better care in that setting than in the mental hospital—and the hospital usually relates to the medical school or the community through a medical advisory committee.

In addition to these affiliated hospitals that Mr. Johnson spoke of, 20 of our hospitals operate under a medical advisory committee which then relates that hospital to the community.

Senator HATFIELD. Do you plan, then, to move away from the strictly isolated mental hospital, as such, toward an integrated medical center program?

Dr. WELLS. We would hope to. We think this is a much more stable pattern and it is a way in which we can relate ourselves to the State and local hospitals and to the mental hygiene program of the entire country.

Senator HATFIELD. The other area is the specialty in the field of geriatrics. What are you doing here with respect to a program that would necessitate less than full hospital care but would be more involved, say, in nursing care and others?

Mr. JOHNSON. Senator, Dr. Haber is here, who is in charge of that whole program, and I would let him speak to this.

I do want to preface his remarks by saying this is one of the areas in which I have exhibited particular interest, based strictly upon statistics available that say half of our veterans are World War II veterans whose average age is 50 years of age, and we have been operating, for example, under a 6,000-bed ceiling for nursing home type beds, and we have made request now to expand that, and in our future projections and studies which I initiated last September, there will have to be a dramatic increase in the number of beds available in this decade of the 1970's.

I might say, too, and the doctor might not want to say this, that this is an area in which we need some assistance from anyone of influence, including the U.S. Senate with the medical schools to get them to have an interest in this particular kind of care. Of late, fortunately, there has been some opening on the part of the medical schools in taking an interest, particularly those training general practitioners, because it is found that a great deal of the general practitioner's time is spent with patients of the nursing home type.

Senator HATFIELD. I did not want to discuss too long, but I just want to say in response to your statement that you are planning some expansion of this program, that if there is some legislation that you are preparing, I would be interested in seeing it.

Mr. JOHNSON. Senator, I would be very pleased to send to you our study, which was completed on this, and will do so to your office.

Senator HATFIELD. Why don't you go ahead.

Senator NELSON. Yes, please continue.

Mr. JOHNSON. The process of drug selection begins at the individual Veterans' Administration hospital. When one of our physicians proposes to add a new drug product to those approved for use, he presents his proposal to the therapeutic agents and pharmacy review committee.

This committee, consisting of representative members of the professional, technical and administrative staff meets at least monthly to review the drug selection process. Before approving a new product, the committee considers available data on the item's safety,