

EDITORIAL

THE TRAINING OF INHALATION THERAPY TECHNICIANS

MUCH has been done during the past five years to establish and standardize the training of Inhalation Therapy Technicians.

A representative and combined committee of the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Anaesthetists' Society has outlined training requirements and has established a detailed curriculum for instruction. In addition, an Accreditation Committee has carefully scrutinized the submissions of applicants wishing to sit the qualifying examinations.

Several teaching hospitals have organized courses of instruction for candidates, which have included courses in Applied Basic Science, the essential elements of Respiratory Disease, and the principles of Inhalation Therapy. Some of these courses have been full-time courses of five to six weeks' duration, and others have been held on a part-time basis and have involved the provision of six to eight didactic hours per week over a period of several months.

The combined board of medical and technician examiners passed fifty-one candidates of the group appearing for the first examinations in 1964. Sixty-six candidates were successful in the examinations for registration, which were held in seven examination centres across Canada in 1965.

The requirements for candidates for admission and training as technicians in this para-medical specialty have been outlined, and the next step is to establish the standards to be met before schools for the training of Inhalation Therapy Technicians can be approved officially.

A brief has been submitted to the combined CMA-CAS Committee on Inhalation Therapy, outlining a proposed basis for approval of schools of instruction. This was prepared by the secretary, Dr. David Pelton, and was considered in detail at a recent committee meeting in Montreal.

For the information of those interested in contributing to this para-medical instruction, and thereby helping to meet the ever-increasing need for technicians of this type, the following information is outlined. Complete details, including current revisions, will be supplied on application to Dr. David Pelton, Department of Anaesthesia, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.

It has been assumed that although schools may differ in size and details of organization, the previously accepted curriculum must be covered. This includes a course in basic sciences and instruction in the clinical application of inhalation therapy to medical and surgical conditions. Instruction must comprehensively cover all aspects of the theoretical subjects outlined and be supplemented by practical instruction and experience for the benefit of the students.

It has been accepted that training may be provided in one of the following types of instructional centres:

1. A school where students receive a complete theoretical and practical training of up to two years' duration.

2. A school providing practical training under qualified instructors, with theoretical instruction provided at a central school organized for this purpose, and in the same city, or at another centre in the same province.

3. Students may receive their basic theoretical training in a central school, and later be transferred to a peripheral, but approved, school for the completion of practical instruction and training.

Certain basic requirements have been established before a school can be formally approved, and these refer to the teaching staff, physical facilities, equipment and the volume and variety of experience available.

The programme of instruction must be under the personal supervision of a Director, who must be a Certificant of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He may be an anaesthetist, an internist interested in cardiac or pulmonary diseases, an otolaryngologist, a surgeon, or some other similarly qualified individual. The Director will be responsible for the provision of adequate instruction in basic science subjects and their application to disease. The Director must be assisted by an experienced individual who is registered by the Canadian Society of Inhalation Therapy Technicians, and who in turn will have under his supervision an adequate number of qualified instructors who must also be registered technicians.

The complete curriculum of study, amplified by a period of practical experience under qualified supervision, will be covered in a period of two years. Instruction must include experience in the use of specific forms of equipment covering a comprehensive variety of procedures. A definite amount of participation will be required before the candidate is accepted for examination. All approved schools must provide adequate library facilities, which must be freely available to students without cost. Students must have instruction in the keeping of records, and must submit a detailed logbook at the completion of their training period, or more frequently as required by local instructors.

It has been accepted that all approved training schools will be reassessed at periodic intervals, not exceeding five years. In the three years preceding each review for approval, seventy per cent of all candidates from the school must have been successful at the annual examinations. Otherwise, approval for that school will be automatically discontinued.

Presently established centres of instruction cannot possibly supply the rapidly increasing demand for technicians and at the same time retain their instructional staffs intact. Because of the large number of appointments available, some hospitals have already suffered serious depletion to the point where their teaching ability has been impaired. The success of the programmes outlined above will depend on the professional interest and increased participation in this type of training. The requirements have been planned with this important aspect in mind. The co-operation of interested physicians is also required to serve on central, and, at a later date, on provincial committees.

This is an interesting and rewarding project, that we hope will attract the participation of many members of the Canadian Anaesthetists' Society.