

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

June 1, 1970

Dear Dr. Oberteuffer:

In the March 1970 issue of *The Journal of School Health*, Joseph C. Paige, Ph.D., wrote an article entitled "Health Programs for the Disadvantaged: Implications for School Health." In this article, the author condemns the present neighborhood health center operations and suggests, as a better program, a system of health centers which will be part of an educational system. In other words, he is suggesting a separate health care system for poor people which is to be operated within neighborhood schools. Some of the statements in this article should be severely challenged on the basis of being entirely undocumented. We are shocked that a person in an academic setting should make statements and accusatory remarks in such shallow and meaningless context. Such statements are: "I wish that I could say something pleasant about the quality of delivery of health services to the poor. Regretfully, I cannot" (the opening statement of the article) and "I have become increasingly disappointed with the neighborhood health center operations. The people in charge, the professionals, are shamefully disappointing, both from the point of views of program conceptualization, people involvement, services and management. There are too many jealousies, too many 'vested' interests, too many job and status insecurities, too many references to 'those people', and too few such references as 'our', 'us', 'we', etc." and "So far I have been critical about the quality and delivery of health services to the poor. They are now, and have been a disgrace, whether a neighborhood, city or school function." Whether these comments are opinions or the result of careful study, nobody knows. The author has not supported one remark in the entire article with facts or figures. It seems absolutely inexcusable to us that a professional person can make such accusations without supplying some form of documentation, article footnotes, study results, etc. We contend that such generalized statements can be classified as untrue and only serve the purpose of being destructive.

Within the past nine months, we have made site visits to over 25 public medical care programs, which have included 12 neighborhood health centers. These visits have been to neighborhood health centers in various parts of the

country, in large metropolitan areas, and in rural areas. The fact that, in 1970, over 50 neighborhood health centers are delivering health care to more than one million people is not unpleasant, shameful and disappointing. On the contrary, most of these people are receiving more health care and of a better quality than they have ever had in their entire lives. These centers are reaching out to the people by not only providing them with health care, but also with training and employment opportunities. To be sure, there are not nearly enough neighborhood health centers nor enough people employed in delivering health care, but we also recognize that these programs have only been in operation for approximately four years and could not possibly make "excellent and abundant health care available to all Americans" in this short period of time.

The suggestion that a new system of health care for poor people be superimposed on our schools is totally unrealistic and impractical. The author is proposing an overwhelming set of inputs for a structure that could not possibly, by any stretch of the professional imagination, tolerate them without disruption, to say nothing of goal displacement. To superimpose a complex health care delivery system on an already overtaxed educational system is an "overkill" approach to the solution of school health problems.

It might have been well for the author to do some reading about new medical care delivery systems, to talk with some recipients of care and with some people who are delivering care in neighborhood health centers. It is true that he might have found some objections and problems. Neighborhood health centers are having difficulties but overall they have been helpful for the poor people in the areas in which they are located. Without background and documentation, this article is most unfortunate, and should not be taken seriously by any of its readers.

Signed,

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