

May 17/73

AIMED AT CUTTING HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS

Mental health clinics trailblazers

Vancouver could be the trailblazer in making mental health care a community affair in Canada.

The new Greater Vancouver Mental Health Project hopes to operate eight community out-patient clinics in five city areas with the aim of reducing hospital admissions and providing improved mental health services at the community level.

R. H. Goodacre, the project's acting executive director, said Wednesday the proposed budget for the project is \$1.8 million a year.

Similar projects have proved successful in New York State and Georgia, but have never been tried in Canada, he said.

"The project could eventually reduce the Riverview occupancy by 40 per cent," Goodacre said in an interview.

He was attending a public meeting to discuss a new Kitsilano clinic.

Riverview Mental Hospital at Essondale has some 2,000 patients.

The Kitsilano community clinic will employ a full-time psychiatrist, an administra-

tor, six psychiatric nurses and will operate on a \$150,000 budget, Goodacre said.

The project's budget still has to pass final approval by the metropolitan board of health and the provincial health department, he said.

The provincial health department last year decided to establish the community mental care units as a result of the findings of the Home Treatment Service, a research project.

Responsibility for the clinics was transferred in February to the Metropolitan Board of Health, a body of municipal politicians and medical health officers.

A pilot project was recently launched at Burrard and Nelson and, with one psychiatrist and two nurses, is treating some 40 West End out-patients, Goodacre said. Dr.

Hugh Parfitt, slated to become the psychiatrist at the new Kitsilano clinic, said the aims will be "to provide mental health care at community level — as much as possible in association with the patient's home. The other aim is to reduce hospital admissions."

"We feel treatment can be more effective in a disturbed person's own environment, with a minimum of dislocation and a maximum of community support," he said.

Parfitt earlier agreed with a recent report to the provincial government which stated that half of the hospital beds in Canada are occupied by psychiatric patients.

He urged the 100 people attending the meeting to actively participate in the project and help define its role.

In an interview before the

meeting, Parfitt said volunteers will be screened and will have to pass a short training course.

He said there would be no danger of seriously-disturbed mental patients running loose in the neighborhood.

"If we feel a person is likely to be dangerous to others and can't be supervised in the home, he would be kept in a hospital."

The project also hopes to provide better child and youth care than is available in hospitals.

The project will also have auxiliary services such as a homemakers' club.

The meeting resolved to formally ask Goodacre to freeze the hiring of staff for the clinic until a citizens advisory board is established and in a position to provide the clinic with guidelines.

Meet slated on family planning

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