

MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS IN THE BRONX

By EDWARD M. BERNECKER, M.D.

The three municipal hospitals in the Bronx are Fordham Hospital, which dates back to March 11, 1892 when it operated as a branch of Bellevue Hospital Lincoln Hospital, which became a city institution in 1925, and Morrisania Hospital, which opened in 1929.

Each of these hospitals has a bed capacity approximating 500 and all of them are operating today beyond 100% capacity. The press and radio have graphically told the story of overcrowding in the municipal hospitals of the Bronx and the other boroughs in this city. There is no question but that additional beds are sorely needed, particularly for long term chronic tuberculosis and cancer patients.



Edward M. Bernecker, M.D.

Before outlining the projects planned for the Bronx, reference might be made to the recent Master Plan of the Hospital Council of Greater New York for hospitals and related facilities. The Bronx has twenty voluntary, municipal and proprietary hospitals, with total general care

beds numbering 3,143 or 2.1 beds per thousand population. With the population of the Bronx for 1950 estimated to be 1,485,000 the Hospital Council has indicated a need of 3.5 general care hospital beds per 1,000 population two years hence. This would mean that the Bronx should have about 2,000 additional general care hospital beds. The present 3,143 such beds are distributed as follows: In municipal hospitals—1,055, proprietary or private hospitals — 778, voluntary hospitals — 1,055.

The Bronx municipal hospitals were mentioned above and the major voluntary institutions are Bronx Eye and Ear Hospital, Bronx Hospital, Bronx Maternity and Woman's Hospital, Lebanon, St. Francis and Unity Hospitals. The proprietary hospitals of this borough include Crotona Park, Fitch Sanatorium, Franklin Maternity Sanatorium, Hunts Point, Leff Center Maternity Hospital, Mt. Eden, Parkchester General, Prospect and Royal Hospitals and the University Heights and the Square Sanatoriums.

Before outlining new municipal hospital construction plans for the Bronx, a word should be said about the over-all needs of the department. The city's 27 municipal hospitals and homes have a total bed capacity of 19,700, with the daily census running close to full capacity. Many of the hospital buildings are

outmoded and even beyond repair, some of them a century old as the barracks-like structures that house the infirm and aged in the City Home on Welfare Island. The Sea View Tuberculosis Hospital on Staten Island is literally falling apart and ward after ward has had to be shut down to insure safety for patients and personnel. Sea View Hospital originally was a 2,000 bed institution but today only 1,400 beds are being used. Modern planning for tuberculosis hospital construction provides that hereafter hospitals of 500 beds or less be constructed and therefore it will require four such 500 beds tuberculosis hospitals as replacement for Sea View. Recent state legislation provides subsidy to municipalities for tuberculosis cases. Where new hospital construction is undertaken, such hospitals must not be larger than 500 beds in order to qualify for state funds.

A 500 bed tuberculosis hospital is being planned for the East Bronx at a total estimated cost of \$10,365,000. Of this amount, \$1,082,000 is provided in the 1948 capital budget for acquisition of the site and for planning and design. It is hoped that construction work may get under way late this year or early in 1949. The East Bronx site to be acquired will be large enough to include a 750

(Continued on page 55)



Morrisania Hospital in The Bronx

(Continued from page 39)

bed general hospital to relieve overcrowding in the other Bronx institutions. The new East Bronx general hospital will also have a psychiatric referral service to serve the borough, similar to the psychiatric services now functioning at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan and Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn.

Undoubtedly, the major voluntary and proprietary hospitals of the Bronx will have additions and new buildings under way before 1950 so that even if the Hospital Council's goal of 2,000 additional general care beds is not fully realized by that time, a good beginning will have been made to provide this borough with adequate hospital beds. In the long range plans in the municipal field, alterations and additions will be provided for Morrisania and Lincoln Hospitals. In the future planning, consideration is also being given for a Nurses Residence and Training School at the new East Bronx general hospital.

As stated above, the immediate needs are for long term, tuberculosis and cancer patients. Three such projects already are under way. The steelwork is up and the general construction contract has been awarded for the Florence Nightingale Cancer Hospital of 300 beds, at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in upper Manhattan. Work was begun last year on the 270 bed James Ewing Memorial Hospital which will be part of the Memorial Cancer Center. The new tuberculosis and chronic disease pavilion at Kings County Hospital of 570 beds is under construction.

High on our "must" list is the new 2,000 bed chronic disease hospital on Welfare Island. This will be a replacement of the present City Home for the Aged and Infirm, many buildings of which date back to 1847. Work on this project has already started and the general contract will be let soon. A 500 bed tuberculosis hospital will also be constructed on Welfare Island, and the present Sea View Hospital will be replaced by a 500 bed institution. Metropolitan Hospital, at the north end of Welfare Island, whose buildings date back to 1848, will be replaced on the Manhattan mainland in the East Harlem area. City Hospital, on the South end of Welfare Island, will be replaced as a new 750 bed general hospital in Elmhurst, Queens. This hospital, like the new East Bronx hospital, will have a psychiatric service for the borough of Queens.

If these projects plus several other items that are not mentioned here can be progressed during the next two years, a good beginning will have been made in meeting the essential municipal hospital needs of this city. It is hoped, of course, that new construction and reconstruction will likewise proceed in the non-governmental field.

I am grateful to Mr. Thomas V. Tozzi, President of the Bronx Board of Trade, for his kind invitation to me to prepare this article for the Anniversary Edition of "BRONXBORO." This organization has served its borough for more than a half century and has ever been in the forefront of activities and movements for the benefit of the people of this borough. It is groups of business and professional men and woman such as the Bronx Board of Trade, which must give support and leadership for providing the

health and welfare services that are essential in a great metropolis such as ours. I know that no municipal activity lies closer to the heart of the members of the Board of Trade than supporting and fostering the finest type of hospital service for the people.

The hospital is a community activity. With the church and school, it forms the foundation upon which rest the health and well-being of our people. The modern hospital has been called one of the finest flowers of our civilization. But hospital construction has not kept pace with the growth of our city. Two World Wars have militated against a construction and reconstruction program that would have provided adequate hospital beds. The hospital today is no longer

a place where people feel they go to die but rather the center of medical and nursing skills that are the vast heritage of man's long striving against disease and death.

In closing, I should like to urge every citizen of the Bronx and every New Yorker to get wholeheartedly behind Mayor O'Dwyer's legislative program designed in his own words, "to further the health, the well-being and the happiness of our citizens." His Honor, the Mayor, in his public announcement of this program, said to his vast radio audience, "With your help we will see it through." Residents of the Bronx particularly should get behind this program because this fast growing borough is in need of so many and such vital improvements.

RUSCIANO & SON CORP.

CONTRACTORS - ENGINEERS

It's pleasant to look back on fifty-nine years of building accomplishment . . . to the many material monuments that are the results of ingenious engineering and construction. We point with pride at such construction achievements as the Hutchinson River Parkway—the westerly approach to the Tri-Boro Bridge—the approach to the George Washington Bridge—the Major Deegan Highway—the Hillside Housing Project—Brooklyn's Rapid Transit Railroad No. 110—and the many Viaducts, Underpasses, Apartment Houses that are monuments of time-endured construction.

We're facing the present with that same skill building the home front . . . but we're looking forward with confidence to the future when peace will bring a vast post-war era of construction . . . by planning for it NOW!

• Founded 1889 •

728 EAST 212th STREET, N. Y. C.

OLinville 5-3525