

THE DENTAL SERVICES OF SRI LANKA

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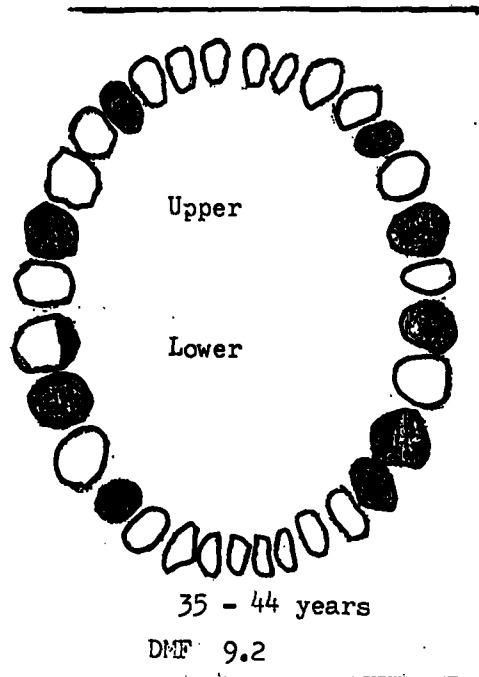
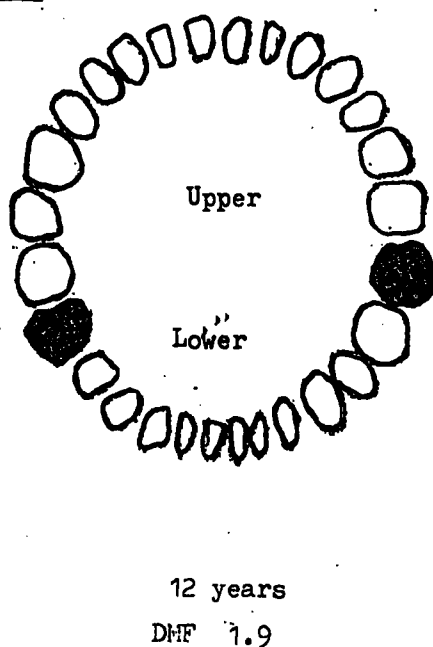
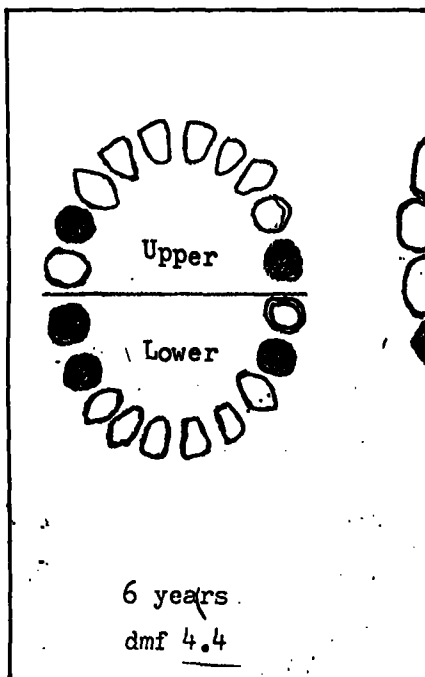
Director - Dental Services

Just as much as the mouth can not be divorced from the body the Dental Services are closely interlinked with the medical services of this country. Dental Services were non-existent in the days

history of the industrialised countries our disease levels too will follow similar patterns. The first national oral health survey conducted in 1983 revealed the following disease levels.

Dental Services in Sri Lanka

The Dental Services are closely integrated with the medical infrastructure of the country. They come under the purview of the Director, Dental Services in the Ministry of Health, who is responsible for the overall management of the Dental Services in the country. He is assisted in this task by the Regional Dental Surgeons, who function as the Head of the decentralised units. The Regional Dental Surgeons are assisted by the Supervising School Dental Therapists. They manage the curative and



of old as this disease too was hardly prevalent. Archeologists will confirm that ancient skulls contained very few diseased teeth. Therefore Dental Disease is a disease of civilization which has evolved with altered life styles of modern day living.

In order to compare the prevalence and severity it has to be measured and the yard stick used for this purpose is the DMF index. The DMF index gives the number of Decayed, Missing (due to decay only) and Filled teeth. From this one can infer how many teeth have been lost or are attacked by caries. In Sri Lanka the caries levels are low compared to the industrialised countries. But if we do not take a lesson from the

From this one can infer that the disease levels in childhood are high (4.4 DMF), in adolescents it is low (1.9 D.M.F.) and rises again in adulthood (9.2).

Periodontal or gum disease is another disease which is widely prevalent in Sri Lanka. This is mainly due to incorrect tooth brushing and bad oral hygiene. 95% of the population require only correct information on tooth brushing, 83% require treatment for removal of calculus or scaling.

The third most prevalent disease in this country is Oral Cancer. Oral cancer accounts for 40% of all cancers recorded in Sri Lanka. The exact figures for oral cancer are yet to be determined.

preventive aspects of dentistry through a network of Hospital and School Dental Clinics.

1. Hospital Dental Clinics

The largest institute providing dental care is situated in Colombo - The Dental Institute at Ward Place adjoining the Accident Service Unit. Any type of dental treatment can be obtained from this Institution. It provides a 24 hour emergency service. There are 5 Specialists and 25 Dental Surgeons employed in this place. It is also a centre for training undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The other dental clinics are situated in

the following types of hospitals:

Teaching hospitals
 Provincial hospitals
 Base hospitals
 District hospitals
 Peripheral Units
 Central dispensaries
 Municipal Clinics

Few clinics

School Dental Service can be categorized as the only preventive dental service in this country.

2.1 Type of service provided

Only children under 13 years of age are treated in these clinics. They perform extractions of Deciduous (milk) teeth,

| Province | Hospital Clinics | | School Clinics | | Population in '000 | D/P ratio |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | No. of clinics | No. of Dentists | No. of clinics | No. of Therapists | | |
| Western | 71 | 172 | 85 | 203 | 4,406 | 11750 |
| Central | 36 | 40 | 43 | 52 | 2,235 | 24293 |
| Southern | 26 | 35 | 48 | 77 | 2,191 | 19562 |
| Northern | 22 | 29 | 6 | 5 | 1,305 | 38382 |
| Eastern | 15 | 16 | 12 | 9 | 1,185 | 47400 |
| North Western | 25 | 27 | 33 | 52 | 1,999 | 25303 |
| North Central | 14 | 11 | 9 | 22 | 1,008 | 30545 |
| Uva | 16 | 15 | 13 | 16 | 1,068 | 34451 |
| Sabaragamuwa | 18 | 22 | 31 | 46 | 1,878 | 24676 |
| Sri Lanka | 244 | 367 | 280 | 501 | 17,075 | 19671 |

1.2 Type of service provided

Extractions, Conservation of teeth (fillings) Scalings and Minor surgical interventions in all clinics.

Root canal therapy, Advanced Conservation (crowns etc.) and Major oral surgery in the bigger hospitals.

1.3 Manpower

Regional Dental Surgeons 7
 Consultant Dental Surgeons –
 Oral surgery – 12
 Orthodontist – 2
 Dental Public health – 8
 Armed services – 27
 Dental Surgeons in Government Service – 338
 Dental Surgeons in General Dental Practice – 130

2. School Dental Clinics

These clinics are situated throughout the length and breadth of the island in the Principal Cluster Schools in the different areas. School Dental therapists who have had a two year training course and are competent to treat the basic dental problems of children under 13 years of age work in these clinics. The

scalings and conservation (filling) of teeth up to the age of 13 years. They are specially trained to give dental health education of all groups of persons. Supervising School Dental Therapists appointed to each district administers, organizes and supervises the School Dental Service in the District.

The most recent strategy to expand the service has been to "Transport the clinic" to a distant place and provide dental treatment to those children who do not have the facility. These Outreach Clinics though very popular are faced with many logistic problems.

2.2 Manpower

Supervising School Therapists – 16
 School Dental Therapists – 485

In future it is envisaged to open more clinics in the rural areas. Special attention will be given to those areas where the Dentists/Population ratio is large. The provision of dental treatment to the public is very costly but still the Government will make every effort to provide this facility to the public.