

## ANAEMIA AND DIABETES MELLITUS IN GENERAL PRACTICE

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THIS IS A BRIEF REPORT on the results of a survey made by our health visitor during 1967–1969. During this period she visited all those patients in the Wiltshire practice who lived in Wootton Bassett and were known to be 65 years or over—a total of 540 out of a population of approximately 7,000.

At her first visit for this survey she tested the urines of all who wished it done; she had nine positives with Clinistix out of 482, of whom two were positive with Clinitest and proved eventually to be suffering from diabetes mellitus. A further 35 said they were already on treatment. The over-65s in the population were screened for diabetes about five years previously and about eight or ten fresh cases were discovered. This would account for the low number of diabetics discovered in the present survey. At the same time she enquired whether they might be willing to have a blood test done for anaemia at some subsequent date, and 276 agreed to have this done; a further 259 declined, stating either that they were feeling well (155) or were already under treatment (104).

The tests were carried out at Princess Margaret Hospital, Swindon; parties of about eight patients being transported each week with the voluntary help of St John's Ambulance and the visiting committee of the Wootton Bassett Committee for the Care of the Elderly to both of whom we are most grateful. The Cyanmist method of haemoglobinometry was used. The results were as follows:

(15gm. Hb. = 100 per cent)					
100 per cent and over	39	70–79 per cent	.. 17	50–59 per cent	.. 3
80–99 per cent	.. 210	60–69 per cent	.. 6	below 50 per cent	.. 1

Those with Hb. below 80 per cent were reported to their doctor. Our usual practice was simply to prescribe iron tablets for those with Hb. between 70 and 80 per cent. Most of these were retested some months later and showed a satisfactory response, except for one patient who was found to be suffering from pernicious anaemia. Those with Hb. below 70 per cent were more fully investigated and followed up; they were all suffering from simple iron-deficiency anaemia.

Although no cases of malignant disease were disclosed by this particular survey, it has made a real contribution to the health and well-being of a group, which was not likely otherwise to have sought treatment; and has been well worth the effort involved.

### Summary

A survey among 540 elderly patients in a population of 7,000 disclosed two previously undiagnosed cases of diabetes mellitus and ten cases of anaemia (Hb. below 70 per cent of 15gm.) among patients not already under treatment.