

Public (1895) Department.

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 524

Dated 5-4-88

RECEIVED.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Requesting the S & G to submit his remarks on the proposal that an additional medical officer may be posted to each of the Districts of Kistna, Beary & Kurnool for plague duty & to suggest arrangements by which three of the doctors recently arrived from England may be made available for this purpose.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.
enc 1337	98						

Public (189) Department.

CURRENT No. / 208

From The L.V.M. Dept.

No.

Dated 25.3.98

Received 30.3.98

Registered 31.3.98

Enclosures 2.

Spare copies -

SUBJECT.

Re: the utility of flying
columns in areas infected
plague.

BACK PAPERS. 1

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of Bombay, General Department,—No. 4073—2810-P., dated Bombay Castle, the 26th July 1897.

READ—

Letter from Dr. J. A. Lowson, dated 9th July 1897—

"I have the honour to enclose, for the information of Government, a report sent last night to Mr. Lamb, Collector of Poona.

"I have to suggest to Government that one or more small plague 'flying columns' be formed for work such as must now be done at Lonavli. I am afraid that in the near future cases like this may occur more frequently than is desirable. I need hardly point out that men who have experience of this work can do it much more satisfactorily than local authorities with local assistance for the time being.

"The composition of a column for the present occasion should be somewhat as follows:—

- 1 Commissioned officer.
- 2 Native Hospital Assistants.
- 1 Female Hospital Assistant.
- 1 Native supervisor of disinfection.
- 20 coolies for disinfection, and a sufficient force of sepoys.

There is at present no police of the slightest use in Lonavli. A great point to remember is not to send an inadequate staff to tinker with the outbreak; consequently it should be added to at once on the recommendation of the Commissioned officer. This officer should be detailed for nothing else but this work, and should proceed at once to investigate all reported outbreaks and, if necessary, take action concerning them. I have found that local officials usually fail to get at all facts and points deserving of notice, and these small outbreaks should be dealt with in a scientific way by a well trained staff, otherwise some of these days the disease may get beyond easy control.

"The 'flying column' method I understand has been practically tested in cholera epidemics in Germany, and I am certain it will be by far the best method of working plague efficiently and economically for the next few months, arrangements being made to draw on Bombay City for coolies and stores as required.

* * * * *

"The situation is now totally different from what it was a few months ago, and some plan of campaign should be formed on the lines I have suggested above, as a time will surely come when plague committees with their organisations must be abolished at the various centres of recent plague. Circumstances so greatly alter requirements that I cannot lay down any rule as to the strength of such organisations as it is now desirable to form; but on no account let them be too small. Men are always attempting to work plague with a small staff. Nothing is more expensive than this.

"I need not insist further on the necessity for immediate action on such occasions, the yearly attack on the disease and prevention of people fleeing all over the country being of paramount importance. This fleeing is assisted by affairs as they are at present. As an official goes to enquire in the neighbourhood, the people get a scent of official operations, and when the staff ultimately set to work from four to seven days later, a general scatter has taken place. I only wish I could adequately express the tremendous advantages and saving of expenditure which immediate action in plague brings about."

Letter from the Surgeon-General with the Government of Bombay, No. 8004, dated 16th July 1897—

"With reference to your No. P.—924-P., dated the 9th instant, I have the honour to state, for the information of Government, that I consider Dr. Lowson's suggestion to have a special staff always ready for despatch to different localities to report on, instruct and help local bodies in stamping out the plague, a very good one.

"2. As long as the plague continues, as at present, to break out in a few localities, it will be quite possible to send a special staff of operators from head-quarters in Bombay, but if there is any general recrudescence of the disease in the future, it must be treated as it has been in Poona and Karachi by special arrangements on the spot. The 'flying column' will be specially useful in small places like Karad and Lonavli: in larger cities like Poona, etc., local measures can be better and more easily organised.

"3. I can easily arrange to form a special plague staff if Government decide that this method of combating plague is to be adopted. There is no difficulty whatsoever in the scheme if Government are prepared to meet the necessary expenditure. I am quite ready to control these special staffs and to form others at short notice; but Government must keep the necessary commissioned officers and hospital assistants on special duty under my control so that they may be available at a moment's notice.

"4. The only difficulty is the sepoys; if there are to be military sepoys, of course the military authorities must be asked to sanction any requisition I make for sepoys; but if there is any objection or difficulty raised on this point, I think specially selected police sepoys might be put at my disposal. If the military sepoys are available, then I should prefer them to police sepoys. I might be allowed to arrange with the General Officer Commanding Bombay District to employ volunteers from the native regiment on this duty at the rate of pay lately sanctioned for similar duties under the Plague Committee, Bombay.

"5. I think at first it will be only necessary to be prepared with two special staffs, which should, I consider, be kept in Bombay, and on telegraphic requisition, I can despatch them to any part of the Presidency.

"I should advise each special staff to consist of 1 commissioned officer, 2 hospital assistants and 2 mucedums of coolies and 12 coolies and 6 sepoys. I do not think a female hospital assistant necessary, and in fact these are not available, but if experience shows that a female member of the staff is required, I can get a Eurasian nurse, as I did lately for Bhusaval station. I have put two mucedums of coolies, because then there can be two separate gangs of coolies at work, a mucedum and 6 trained coolies can easily teach local coolies their work, up to any number required.

"6. I can arrange to have hospital assistants and coolies who have had experience of plague work for the two 'flying columns' to be arranged for at once. If necessity requires other 'flying columns,' I can employ medical practitioners if on supply of Commissioned officers fail, but this contingency can be arranged for in the most advantageous manner when the necessity for more 'flying columns' arises.

"7. I can requisition on the Executive Engineer, Bombay, for the necessary disinfectants, and I should have a special grant, so that I can purchase quicklime, the necessary tools, etc., and give advance to the staff for travelling allowance, etc. This proposal to have 'flying columns' is, I think, a good one, but I do not think it will be economical; still any measure which enables us to fight the plague effectively and scientifically should not be rejected on the score that it is more expensive than imperfect local measures."

Letter to the Surgeon-General with the Government of Bombay, No. P.—956-P., dated 13th July 1897:—

"With reference to the outbreak of plague at Karad, I am directed to ask you to be so good as to at once arrange to send an extra hospital assistant to that place.

"Also with reference to the possibility of such outbreaks in other places—and it may be noted that new outbreaks have been reported also at Lonavli and in the Surat District—I am directed to invite your remarks on a suggestion that has been made to Government that a Board, with perhaps yourself as its President, should be constituted to direct operations against the plague in scattered places in this Presidency. I am also to invite your remarks on a further suggestion that a junior commissioned medical officer might be made an itinerant plague officer to immediately visit places where plague breaks out and superintend operations."

Letter from the Surgeon-General with the Government of Bombay, No. 8010, dated the 16th July 1897:—

"With reference to your No. P.—956-P., dated the 13th instant, I have the honour to state, for the information of Government, that a hospital assistant has been ordered to Karad, and the Collector of Satara has been informed of his despatch.

"2. I have no objection to the President of a Board to direct operations against plague in scattered places in this Presidency, if Government consider such a Board necessary, but I beg to state that I see no reason why an outbreak of plague in a mofussil town or village cannot be managed by the same agency which directs the operations against cholera, viz., the Surgeon-General, the Collector, Civil Surgeon, and other civil officers of the district.

"Cholera is a dangerous epidemic disease like plague, requires the same sanitary methods to stamp it out, and as a rule kills more people than plague. If the Surgeon-General and the civil officers of Government in the different districts have, for years, arranged for the treatment of all outbreaks of cholera, I see no reason why the same agency should not treat outbreaks of plague.

"4. I can understand the advisability of Plague Committees in places like Bombay, Karachi and Poona, where it is necessary to set aside municipalities, but in ordinary mofussil towns and villages, where the wishes of Government are supreme, the rational for exceptional and special authority is not apparent.

"5. I have already addressed Government on the question of 'flying columns' to visit places where plague appears, in this office No. 8004, dated 16th July 1897, and I need only further remark that I think it would be an excellent arrangement to keep a junior commissioned officer on special plague duty, ready always to go to and direct the necessary operation at any place where plague breaks out."

Letter from the Joint Plague Commissions, dated 12th July 1897.

Letter to the Surgeon-General with the Government of Bombay, No. P.—961-P., dated 15th July 1897:—

"In view of probability of a recrudescence of a plague in parts of this Presidency, His Excellency the Governor in Council thinks that it should be considered whether a special Plague Department should be formed with an organization of a rapidly moveable and adaptable character which could be at once moved to the locality in which the outbreak had been reported. The executive officers attached to this Department should be medical officers with wide plague experience who on the report of any unusual sickness or mortality should at once proceed to investigate it and have the power to requisition on the Plague Department for a sufficient staff to stamp out the disease. To this Department should be sent all reports and returns touching on plague matters, so that the office may receive the earliest information on the subject. I am to request that Government may be favoured with your views on the subject at the earliest date practicable."

Letter from the Surgeon-General to the Government of Bombay, No. 8070, dated 17th July 1897:—

"With reference to your No. P.—961-P., dated 15th instant, I have the honour to state, for the information of Government, that I consider the establishment of a special Plague Department with special powers would be a very efficient way of dealing with a recrudescence of plague in parts of this Presidency, but I cannot see why there should be a Special Department for plague and not one for cholera or malarial fevers; the former disease is a dangerous epidemic disease, and the latter claims more victims every year than any other disease in India, yet it has never been considered necessary to take special steps, of the nature now proposed by Government, to stop the yearly recurrence of these diseases.

"2. I am distinctly of opinion that the creation of a special Plague Department will be a tacit confession that our ordinary methods are wrong and faulty, and that the usual machinery of Government—sanitary, medical and civil—is so imperfect that the advent of plague has utterly disorganised their working powers. I do not consider this to be the case, and as mentioned in my No. 8010, dated 16th instant, I think that Government has the whole machinery for directing plague operations ready without the creation of a special Plague Department.

"3. All that is required is to give the Surgeon-General power to at once form two three or more 'flying columns' as detailed in my No. 8004, dated the 16th instant, and to notify to all Collectors that on the outbreak of plague a telegraphic reference should be made to the Surgeon-General direct, who will at once despatch a column to the spot. All reports and information of course will be immediately telegraphed to Government by me, who will be kept *au courant* with all events and actions under this head.

"4. The 'flying columns' and the local civil officers of Government will be able to do all that is required, and there will be no fuss, provided I am allowed to arrange for everything and direct all the necessary measures required. My office establishment is already overworked, *vide* my No. 4650, dated 1st May 1897, and I must request Government, if my proposal is adopted, to sanction four extra clerks as a temporary measures to deal with the extra correspondence that this proposal will entail; the rest I shall be able to manage; and if I find after experience that more help of a superior kind is required, Government can later on depute another medical officer or any other officer they think fit to help my Secretary.

I think this procedure of working measures against plague, through the Surgeon-General, Collectors of Districts and civil officers better than any creation of a special Department which I consider unnecessary.

Letter to the Surgeon-General with the Government of Bombay, No. P.—1026-P., dated the 21st July 1897.

Memorandum to the Accountant General, No. P.—1024-P., dated the 21st July 1897.

Memorandum to the Executive Engineer, Presidency, No. P.—1025-P., dated the 21st July 1897.

RESOLUTION.—The suggestions made by the Surgeon-General with a full sense of his responsibility are accepted to the extent shown below, but if experience should show that a further development of a special plague staff is required, Government will expect to be promptly informed, even though the treatment of cholera and other epidemics may offer no analogy for similar special arrangements.

2. The Surgeon-General is authorised to at once form two "flying columns" and to add to their number when required. The Surgeon-General should endeavour to have at least one "flying column" in reserve ready for despatch at a few hours' notice to the scene of a local outbreak of plague. The Surgeon-General should be at once informed of such outbreak by telegram from the chief local officer.

3. The exact composition of a "flying column" must be left to the Surgeon-General. It will ordinarily consist of a commissioned officer, two hospital assistants, coolies and sepoys, Government consider that it will be more convenient to employ police than military sepoys. The Surgeon-General should arrange for police in consultation with the Inspector-General or (in Bombay City) the Commissioner of Police, who should arrange to supply picked men as far as possible. Government further consider that it is highly desirable that at least one female, probably a nurse, should be attached to each column.

4. The duties of the "flying columns" will be to advise and assist the local authorities in suppressing the plague. The Surgeon-General is given full authority to direct the measures, subject to a clear understanding that in case of practical difficulties presenting themselves, the decision must rest with the local authorities whose responsibility for the administration will not be affected by these orders. The "flying columns" will assist the local executive.

5. Disinfectants will ordinarily be obtained from the Executive Engineer, Presidency, but the Surgeon-General is hereby given a grant of Rs. 1,000 for the purchase of such disinfectants, tools, etc., as he cannot conveniently obtain from Executive Engineer. The Surgeon-General will make all arrangements for disinfectants.

6. The Surgeon-General is permitted to make such arrangements regarding the superior and subordinate medical staff in Government service as he may think necessary in order to rapidly form the necessary "flying columns." He should not engage private practitioners (except in cases of emergency) without reference to Government, as there may be difficulties regarding their pay and allowances.

7. The Surgeon-General may engage four temporary clerks on such pay as he thinks necessary, but should, as soon as possible, submit detailed statements of the cost for formal sanction. He should also, at his earliest convenience, submit an estimate, in such detail as is possible, of the cost of the measures now sanctioned.

No. 481.

FROM

R. NATHAN, Esq.,

Under Secretary to the Government of India,

TO

Home Department.
Sanitary.

Calcutta, the 9 March 1898.

SIR,

IN continuation of Home Department Resolution No. 227-240, dated the 3rd February 1898, I am directed to forward, for

a copy of a circular letter, No. of this date, and enclosures, on the subject of the utility of flying columns in areas infected with plague.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

R. NATHAN,

Under Secretary to the Government of India.

No.

Resolution of the Government of Bombay, No. 4073-2810-P., dated the 26th July 1897, and enclosures.
Letter from the Government of Bombay, No. 1146 P., dated the 14th February 1898, and enclosure.

COPY of the foregoing letters, with a copy of the papers marginally noted, forwarded to the Foreign Department for information and communication to the other Local Administrations under its control.

By order,

R. NATHAN,

Under Secretary to the Government of India.

I

In my path, I think that for the present we may be contented with our "Ambulance Staff", which are really flying columns. If an additional medical officer (any of those from England) is posted to Bellary, Kurnool and Kistna, we shall have in each district a competent person to take charge of each "Ambulance Staff" (flying columns) --

(Signed) H.W. Bliss
18-3-98.

II

Yes, I think our Regulations are sufficient. The Surgeon General should report promptly on the proposal made by Sir H. Bliss to send an additional medical officer to Bellary, Kurnool & Kistna?

(Signed) A. E. H.
23-3-98.

(The Extracts)

A. Trevelyan
Secretary to Govt

Forwarded to Public
for necessary action.

H
25-3-98

Papers to be read in Proceedings:—

Again G.O., No.	, dated	189 .
Again G.O., No.	, dated	189 .
Current No. 1208	of 1898, dated	, from L & H
" "	" 189 , "	" "
" "	" 189 , "	" "

ORDER. W. 524 & 54-88.

In connection with the maintenance of the ambulance staff referred to in G.O. no 93 P. (L & H) of 26/1/98 in the Districts of Kistna, Bellary & Kurnool it has been suggested that it would be desirable to post a doctor of these districts an additional medical officer. The S. S. is requested to submit his remarks on the proposal at an early date & to suggest any other district officer of the character of the doctor recently arrived from England may be available for this purpose.

The Surgeon General

M. A. 5.4.98
4/4/98

When given for copying 5/4
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 When examined } 5-4 } 1898
 When signed

READ AGAIN G.O., No. 189 DATED

CURRENT No.

ENCLOSURES TO C. No.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT A A A A A A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

PAID UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH
 IN ORIGINAL.

N.B.—
 A = Copy in full.
 B = Not to be copied.
 F = Copy abstract only.
 G = Copy heading only.