

THE NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A NATIONAL LIBRARY OF HEALTH

The fundamental need for the establishment of a National Library of Health lies in the essential purposes it serves in preserving, supporting, and advancing the health of the nation. These purposes are achieved through its function of providing ready accessibility to recorded knowledge in all phases of medicine and related fields of endeavor. To carry out this function it must collect, house, and index publications in medicine and allied sciences from every available source including book, monographs, journals, periodicals, and other documents. By maintaining such a repository of medical and health literature and with appropriate cataloging and indexing to provide adequate bibliographic control this knowledge becomes readily available for both research and educational purposes to advance the medical and health standards of the nation.

Access to this recorded literature and the ready dissemination of this scientific information are of vital concern to research workers. Progress in medical research is dependent upon the development of new ideas and hypotheses and new techniques as well as the provision of scientific data. As these are recorded in current medical scientific literature they become available to research workers but the availability of this recorded material is dependent upon adequate indexing or bibliographic control. This then becomes a vital and essential function of the library for through this activity research workers can easily find and quickly obtain current scientific information on new ideas, techniques and other experimental developments which may be drawn upon and incorporated in their own studies to advance the frontiers of medical science.

Similarly in the practice of medicine and in the application of new knowledge to provide a better understanding of disease and its effective control, the library serves an essential purpose. By collecting and indexing current medical

literature the latest information on disease processes and their effective treatment becomes currently available for clinical application by medical practitioners in their efforts to promote and elevate the health of our people.

Still another and highly important function of a National Library of Health lies in its usefulness for intelligence purposes. By collecting medical publications from all countries and in all languages it becomes possible to draw inference regarding the state of medicine in these countries and their health resources, as well as special disease problems that may be indigenous to particular areas. Such information is of value in estimating the basic economic situation of a country as well as their level of scientific development.

These and other important activities of a National Library of Health emphasize its highly important function in preserving and promoting the health of the nation. It is, therefore, essential that our government establish and support such an institution.