



SEMINAR ON THE TRAINING AND UTILIZATION
OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

7 November 1974

Khartoum, 16 - 21 December 1974

ENGLISH ONLY

INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 2

1. Further to the information provided in Information Bulletin No. 1 concerning "Health Documents", all participants are advised to have vaccination against Yellow Fever, in view of the fact that field visits are now arranged for the Gezira area. Please refer to the enclosed amended Provisional Programme.

2. TECHNICAL BACKGROUND DATA

THE MEANING OF THE TERM "MEDICAL ASSISTANT"

To avoid confusion, some understanding on what is included in the title "Medical Assistant" should be reached so it can serve as a frame of reference for the seminar. "Medical Assistant" will be used in a generic sense; the term encompasses a wide range of health personnel performing functions as described in WHO Technical Report Series No. 385:

" ... the term "medical assistant" is used to mean a health worker who has received appropriate training and who, in the field of promotion, protection and restoration of health (including diagnosis and treatment of disease) has certain clearly defined duties and responsibilities ... "

The Report continues -

"The term "medical assistant" refers to an auxiliary to a physician. The medical assistant may work in an institution under the direct supervision of a physician; he (she) may

perform his (her) duties in an outlying post; or he (she) may be a member of a health team with only remote supervision by a physician ... "

In the magazine World Health of June 1972, the Technical Report definition is supported in an introductory article where the medical assistant is described as:

"Health personnel whose duties may range from simple curative procedures for common diseases to wider care, including a variety of diagnostic, curative and preventive practices ... "

So, the "medical assistant" may be an assistant medical officer, a paediatric associate, a maternal and child health specialist, a hospital assistant, a health extension officer, a medex, a medical assistant or whatever you have. The present seminar is concerned with the training and all the functions performed by a wide range of health personnel covered under the rubric "medical assistant".

It is not intended that the seminar should devote time to new attempts at further defining the term "medical assistant".

Therefore, it is incumbent upon each seminar participant to be thoroughly familiar with the health personnel in their country who satisfy the descriptions given above. Furthermore, each participant should be familiar with the health care system(s) in his/her country and how "medical assistants" operate within that system.

Please feel free to bring along any information which you might consider pertinent to the objectives of the seminar. Only by sharing information and ideas can we develop a better appreciation of how health personnel encompassed in the description "medical assistant" can be instrumental in improving the quantity and quality of health services.