

3 December 1962.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 31

TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS:

Dear Doctor,

"THE SOUTH ISLAND EXPERIMENT"

This is a progress report on the experiment which was commenced early in July, to determine the influence of period of supply restrictions on pharmaceutical costs.* The seven-day restriction on ordinary prescriptions, and the extended supply provisions, have been waived in the case of doctors residing in the South Island, who may prescribe according to the requirements of each particular case, stating the total quantity to be issued. With North Island doctors the usual restrictions continue to apply.

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS

Up to the present the results have been fairly satisfactory.

The simplest method of assessment is to express the pharmaceutical cost per head of population in the South Island as a percentage of the figure for the North Island. In the 36 months up to 30 June 1962 the average was 83 per cent. It exceeded 95 per cent in only five months.

The following table gives the figures for the first three months of the experiment and (in the last column) figures for the corresponding period last year:

COST OF PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS

Month	Per Head of Population		South Island as Percentage of North Island	
	North Island	South Island	1962	1961
	s. d.	s. d.	%	%
July	5 7	5 1	91	91
August	5 8	5 7	99	92
September	5 3	5 2	98	90

*Clinical Services Letter, No. 27, dated 4 July.

P.T.O.

Schedule claims for General Medical Services appear to indicate an unusual prevalence of illness in the South Island in September:

COST OF GENERAL MEDICAL SERVICES

Month	Per Head of Population: South Island as a Percentage of North Island	
	1962	1961
	%	%
July	87	89
August	90	97
September	132	115

ORDERING OF EXCESSIVE QUANTITIES

Instances where prescriptions for excessively large quantities of medicines have been issued in the South Island have come to notice. One patient is reported to have been admitted to a public hospital with two 1,000-bottles of Librium capsules. While we are loath to interfere while the experiment is in progress, flagrant examples of apparent overprescribing cannot be ignored. Arrangements have been made to take up certain cases with the doctors concerned.

Yours faithfully,

A. W. S. Thompson

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Director,

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NOTE—Figures for pharmaceutical costs are based on the monthly *intake* of prescriptions, and are not affected by delays in pricing offices or arrears of payments to chemists.