

Correspondence: Maternal Mortality *[extract]*

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I cannot assent to the idea that any Government Department can fairly be blamed for an evil which has been growing insidiously all over the world, owing to a number of factors incidental to our modern civilisation. The fact is that Society—all of us—must share the responsibility. We are not going to get reform by abusing Health Authorities or the doctors, or the Monthly Nurses, but by coming one and all to the aid of the Health and Education Departments in a common effort to make maternity safe for the mother and safe for the child.

You may say what has education to do with the matter—this is purely the question of medicine, surgery and nursing. Nothing of the kind—each of these important agencies is, of course, involved, and we must have the whole-hearted help and support of both doctors and nurses; but it is equally important that we should have the whole-hearted sympathy and support of husband and wife—indeed of the whole community.

We must *educate* and *help* the mothers, prospective and actual, and we must do all in our power to promote the most perfect *education, training* and *practice* for doctors, nurses and midwives—inside and outside our medical school and maternity hospitals—in regard to everything affecting the well-being of mother and child. By perfecting professional training and practice we shall be giving effect to what are at present unfulfilled

ideals of the new British Ministry of Health under Sir George Newman. The first advice given to him by his professional colleagues and advisers was to the effect that the proper care and safe-guarding of mother and child must bulk much more largely in the teaching and practical training of medical students and nurses that has been the case in the past; and that steps must be taken for giving every facility to practising doctors and nurses to receive post-graduate or “refresher” courses enabling them to keep up-to-date. Every monthly nurse should be kept up-to-date, so that she may be a safe and reliable guide and helper to the mother.

We want a series of simple authoritative lectures and demonstrations to be given from end to end of the Dominion to all existing maternity nurses and midwives. These addresses should be more than mere formal scientific up-to-date lectures—they should constitute a moving appeal from a qualified and gifted woman of wide experience to her professional sisters and fellow workers to do all that lies in their power for the mothers of New Zealand—an appeal made on the highest humanitarian and patriotic grounds.

I may say that there has been some delay in getting this scheme established, the suggested mission to nurses and midwives is now under way, and will be carried through in the course of the next few months.