

CONFIDENTIAL

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June 2, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR CAPTAIN STEPHENSON

Attached herewith is a summary of a confidential report covering medical considerations incident to recruiting of women for service in the Royal Canadian Air Force, together with observations on service requirements. The report is dated March 20, 1942 and was sent to the U. S. War Department from Ottawa in the form of a Military Attache Report, Military Intelligence Division, WDGS; source, Medical Branch, R. C. A. F. The summary was prepared after studying the report in the office of Lt.-Col. Turner, Medical Corps, U. S. Army.

J. F. Shronts.

subject:

Medical Considerations, Recruitment of Women,  
(R. C. A. F.)

The introductory statements of John S. Gullet, Lt. Col. G. S. C., Military Attache, include a recommendation that the War Department study this subject in the light of Canadian experience. In summarizing the Canadian experience, Lt. Col. Gullet states that in recruitment, training, and handling women, the R. C. A. F. utilized facilities available for men, improvisations being made as permitted. The most important considerations confronting the R. C. A. F. are medical, and these did not receive the initial considerations they deserved. As a result, situations have developed which have proved embarrassing to the women and to the R. C. A. F. The outstanding problem is venereal disease and pregnancy is a close second. (No figures on the incidence of these conditions, either total cases, or rates are included in the report). In an attempt to solve these problems, educational programs, including films, are being prepared.

Col. Gullet states that the R. C. A. F. drew on the experience of the British, but that the Canadian problem has proved to be peculiar to itself. Reasons given are that Canada is not a theatre of operations and that a different outlook and moral codes have been encountered. The Canadians have been obliged to proceed on a trial and error basis and it is admitted that several problems have not been solved. The difficulties have affected the Canadian Army as well as the women of the R. C. A. F.

The policy for utilizing women is a result of political pressure, according to reports that Col. Gullet received. The Canadian Navy had refused to accept women up to and including the date of the report. The Local Service Flying Training School at Uplands Air Station was used as a testing place and the use of women proved fairly satisfactory because of many residing in Ottawa. Greater difficulties are expected at isolated stations where women will be dependent upon station life and where they will be removed from their home communities and friends.

Part of the difficulty may be that higher officers (with the exception of medical) have not recognized their responsibilities in using women.

Medical Requirements for Recruiting Women

These include complete physical examination, urinalysis, chest x-ray and serological test for syphilis. Age limits are 19 to 40 inclusive, minimum heights 60 inches, maximum 72 inches. The minimum weight is 100 pounds, the maximum is not fixed. Requirements for vision are the same as for "Ground Crew." Medical officers are required to carefully examine the breasts for growths or other abnormalities. Careful nervous system and psychological examinations are required.

A history of gonorrhoea within 3 years is cause for rejection and if a vaginal discharge is suspected of being gonorrhoeal, the applicant must produce a certificate from a gynecologist that she is free of venereal disease. Applicants having a positive serology are retested and if still positive, they are rejected.

Dysmenorrhoea or menorrhagia which incapacitates for 1/2 a day or longer is cause for rejection. Amenorrhoea is cause for rejection because of possible pregnancy. Occupational dermatitis, psoriasis and other skin diseases are cause for rejection.

Careful attention to the conduct of examinations is required, and the medical officer at the recruiting station is held responsible. It is expected that the personal feelings of the applicants will be appreciated and respected.

### Considerations for Utilizing Women on a Station

1. Additional plumbing installations. Convenience, comfort and location are considerations for toilets and rest rooms.
2. Provision for disposal of sanitary towels. Receptacles provided at each toilet bowl to avoid plugging of plumbing. Free issue of sanitary towels is provided, 12 per month.
3. Separate hospital facilities.
4. Separate sick call.
5. Procurement of gynecological drugs and instruments.
5. Arrangement of barracks provides 78 bunks, (39 double deckers), 24 wash basins, 9 heads, 5 showers, 2 bath tubs to each barrack. This proportion has proven adequate.
7. Careful attention to proper shoe fitting and to care of feet have been necessitated by large number of women requiring medical attention for foot conditions.
8. Inoculation program same as for men.
9. Provide suitable and harmless deodorant. Free issue will be provided when suitable deodorant is available.

### Other Considerations, Including Venereal Disease and Birth Control

1. R. C. A. F. accepts no women with children dependent on them for financial support or for care.
2. Pregnant women are discharged and are not permitted to re-enlist. Arrangements are made with social agencies for care of mother and child, if desired.
3. No birth control information is disseminated.
4. Venereal disease has been a serious problem because of difficulties involved, not because of numbers. All cases are discharged and no provisions are made for treatment. It is admitted that this policy leads to concealment of cases because a certain number of cases is inevitable. Infected men are not discharged, and it is not good public health practice to discharge women untreated. Local health authorities are notified in every case.
5. No attempts have been made to provide V. D. prophylaxis for women, nor are any anticipated.
6. Sex educational programs at training depots have been expanded and the need for more recreational facilities has been recognized.
7. In general, maladjustments among women to life in the service have been few. Women have proved themselves most useful in duties associated with hospitals.