

蘭州扶輪社 / 上海扶輪社主辦砂眼防治

Project Anti-Trachoma 1944-1951

Lanchow Rotary Club & Shanghai Rotary Club

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

1 December 2021

Since the inception of the 7 Areas of Focus by Rotary International in recent years, December every year is designated as “Disease Prevention and Treatment Month”, commencing from this Rotary Year 2015-2016.

The concern on disease prevention and treatment is not a new idea of service to address the community need in China. In the 1940s of the last century, Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社), as well as Lanchow Rotary Club (蘭州扶輪社) which was even several months old, had paid attention to the public health of the local people. There were projects in “Anti-Trachoma”.

## What is Trachoma

Trachoma is an infectious disease caused by bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The infection causes a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids. This roughening can lead to pain in the eyes, breakdown of the outer surface or cornea of the eyes, and eventual blindness. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can result in a form of permanent blindness when the eyelids turn inward.

The bacteria that cause the disease can be spread by both direct and indirect contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Indirect contact includes through clothing or flies that have come into contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Children spread the disease more often than adults. Poor sanitation, crowded living conditions, and not enough clean water and toilets also increase spread.

Efforts to prevent the disease include improving access to clean water and treatment with antibiotics to decrease the number of people infected with the bacterium. This may include treating, all at once, whole groups of people in whom the disease is known to be common. Washing, by itself, is not enough to prevent disease but may be useful with other measures. Treatment options include oral azithromycin and topical tetracycline. Azithromycin is preferred because it

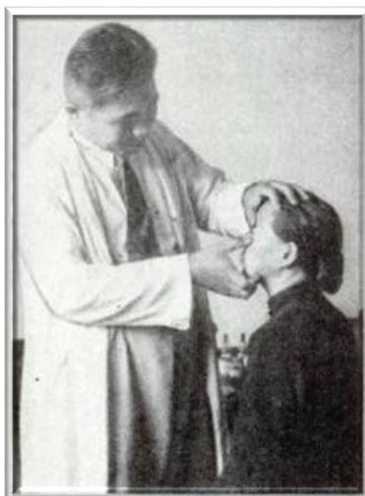
can be used as a single oral dose. After scarring of the eyelid has occurred, surgery may be required to correct the position of the eyelashes and prevent blindness.

The disease is one of the earliest known eye afflictions, having been identified in Egypt as early as 15 B.C. Its presence was also recorded in ancient China and Mesopotamia. Trachoma became a problem as people moved into crowded settlements or towns where hygiene was poor. It became a particular problem in Europe in the 19th century. Stringent control measures were introduced and by the early 20th century, trachoma was essentially controlled in Europe, although cases were reported up until the 1950s.

## Lanchow Rotary Club

Lanchow Rotary Club was organized and admitted to Rotary International on 11 November 1943 with 22 members. Nine of them were former Rotarians from Sian, Tsinan, Nanking, Foochow, respectively. The charter president was Fei Wen-Yao (費文堯), a government official of Salt Administration, and a former member of Sian Rotary Club (西安扶輪社).

When the Rotary Club of Lanchow was still few months old, it had already established a station to treat sufferers of trachoma – an eye ailment which affects a large percentage of local people, especially school children. The Club did not do the job alone. It won the generous financial support of the local public, obtained the full co-operation of a local hospital which furnished staff and supplies, and provided the necessary premises and equipment itself. Writing to Charles L. Wheeler, during whose term as President of Rotary International the Club was born, President Fei said, “We shall constantly endeavor to do our utmost to justify the confidence shown us.” After what the little Club had already done, Charlie Wheeler felt that goes without saying -- Modern weapons of science were battling an ancient disease in Lanchow (*Lanzhou*), China.



*Dr. Wang Po-Hua examines a patient at the anti-trachoma clinic sponsored by the Rotary Club of Lanchow, China.*

## Shanghai Rotary Club

Another Chinese Rotary Club – Shanghai – had taken up the matter of improving the eye health of the nation. In 1947, the Club earmarked 12 million Chinese National Dollars (中華民國法幣 1,200 萬元) to start and support an anti-trachoma clinic.

Anti-trachoma work had had a top priority among Rotarians of Shanghai, China, for some time, during a ten-month period the Club's clinic on the grounds of a local factory treated 2,000 to 3,000 persons a month, or a total of 30,000 treatments. Another clinic saw 1,312 cases examined; and a third clinic – a mobile unit – was operated on a regular schedule (*see photo*).



*Supplementary to the 2 Rotary Anti-Trachoma clinics in fixed premises, the 3rd clinic is mobile to provide such treatment to 2,100 youngsters living in Boys' Town, a settlement of former street urchins in an old jail. Shanghai Rotary Club President 1947-1948, George J. McCarthy (right 1), and his fellow Rotarians pose beside the Club's Mobile Anti-Trachoma Clinic (上海扶輪社主辦防治沙眼診療車)*

(Note) The Rotary Anti-trachoma Clinic (上海扶輪社砂眼防治所) located at No.442, An Yuan Road, Putuo District (普陀區安遠路 442 號) carried on functioning (with 1 doctor, 2 nurses and 1 assistant) until 12 September 1951 when it was handed over by the Club to the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, and became a clinic of the Shanghai Municipal No.1 Workers Hospital (上海市市立第一勞工醫院).

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During the 4th Plenary Session convened at the 39th Annual Convention of Rotary International on 19 May 1948, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, “Charlie” Wei Tsen-Fu (韋增復) (*Shanghai Rotary Club President 1946-1947; incoming Governor of 97th District 1948-1949; Classification - Coal Distribution*) told the congregation:

In the Shanghai Club during the past years, we have tackled many short projects for one year, a maternity hospital, tuberculosis, Salvation Army, orphanages, and things like that. But at the beginning of last year, we thought we would tackle something on the longer term.

You know, China has two deadly enemies: one is tuberculosis and the other is trachoma, which you people from America are not familiar with because you do not have that disease. But in China we have over 30 percent of the population afflicted with trachoma.

So, the Board of Directors and the Community Service Committee got together, and formed an Anti-Trachoma Committee. I was made Chairman of that Committee this year.

I want to tell the Rotarians here what we are doing. We started to ask for voluntary contributions from members, and we got the equivalent of about \$2,000. So, we started a clinic in a congested section. After that clinic got going, we sold the idea to the hospital agency, and we started clinics elsewhere. We also started a mobile unit so that the unit could visit the schools and factories. We plan to extend that project all over the country so that in a few years’ time we hope that Rotary will have made some contribution toward Community Service in China.

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*Attachment (4 pages):*

The Rotary Anti-trachoma Clinic (上海扶輪社砂眼防治所) located at No.442, An Yuan Road, Putuo District (普陀區安遠路 442 號) carried on functioning (with 1 doctor, 2 nurses and 1 assistant) until 12 September 1951 when it was handed over by the Club to the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government, and became a clinic of the Shanghai Municipal No.1 Workers’ Hospital (上海市市立第一勞工醫院).

Part of the handover documents of The Rotary Anti-Trachoma Clinic between Shanghai Rotary Club and Shanghai Municipal No.1 Workers Hospital.

The original papers are being kept by the Shanghai Municipal Archives at the Bund (上海市檔案館 -- 上海市黃浦區中山東二路 9 號 ).

# ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

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(函公)府政民人區陀普市海上

受文者 <b>衛生局</b>	提要	批示
有關文件	發文 普府衛 一九五 年	附件 擬辦

**上海市普陀區人民政府之印**

1004  
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一、本區在遠路442號扶輪社設立砂眼防治所一所，有兼職醫師一人，護士二人（均工作半天），事務員一人（全天工作）每日下午門診，就診者大半是工人和其他勞動人民，全部免費，有時多至二百人，該所設立迄今已有三年，向未是接受外資津貼，設備简陋，曾向本府登記申請診所許可証。

二、該所因津貼斷絕，自七月份起將無法維持，曾向軍

地址 江寧路一〇四號  
電話 二九一四

管會接受外資津貼醫齒療機構登記處登記。

三、經本府了解該所房屋由中國化學工業社製造廠免費借用空地建築，水電亦由該廠供給，目前每月開支約三四百萬元。

四、本府意見，可得該所接管，由本府衛生科管理，續辦並加以必要的整理與充實其工作人員等暫時維持現狀，每月所需上項經費開支由你局撥發，五、即請你局決定。

局長

張應舉

校對方之明

監印宋榮秀

