



12-1-1982

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Recommended Citation

Chen, Chue-Fun and Lien, I-Nan (1982) "Survey of Spinal Cord Injury in Taipei City during 1978-1979," *Rehabilitation Practice and Science*: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6315/3005-3846.1621>

Available at: <https://rps.researchcommons.org/journal/vol10/iss1/9>

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REHABILITATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN REGION)

1982 Report from the Rehabilitation Medicine Association,
Republic of China

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RI National Secretary; RMA, ROC Secretary General

The 1979 National Report to Sixth Pan-Pacific Conference of Rehabilitation International gave a detailed survey of the progress of fifteen years. This Report will concentrate on what is going on at the present time.

In 1980 the Legislative Yuan, the law-making body of this country, passed the long-awaited Welfare Act for the Disabled. It is only beginning to be implemented and the effects of it are yet to be seen, but already more attention is being paid to vocational and medical concerns. This year, the Cabinet proposed an amendment for legislation on the fifty-year-old Family Law which was revised to prohibit close relatives from marrying in order to prevent the occurrence of hereditary diseases and deformities. In addition, the Legislative Yuan passed new legislation to legalize the transplants of corneas from those who have expressly willed to donate them for the benefit of the blind. The law came into effect upon promulgation in August, 1982.

A national survey of disabled persons was recently completed with the following preliminary findings:

Number of disabled persons registered	177,917
Number of persons medically evaluated before May 10, 1982	160,479
Number of persons with permanent disabling conditions	130,526

Because of limitations in method, the census has considerably underestimated the actual number of persons with disability. A 1974-1976 survey of school children aged six to twelve identified 34,564 students with disabilities out of a total of 2,350,000 or 1.47 percent. If this percentage were projected for the entire population there would be over 300,000 persons with disability in the Taiwan Region. Actually, since children with disabilities not attending school were not counted in the survey and the incidence of disability increases with age, there should be an even greater number.

The number of hospitals that offer rehabilitation medical services continues to increase. The National Health Administration is gradually implementing its plan to make medical rehabilitation available in all provincial and municipal hospitals nationwide.

A recent outbreak of polio has greatly revitalized the ongoing campaign to have about 75 percent of children under 12-years-old, now being extended to 15-years-old, pupils immunized. From April 23, 1982 when the outbreak started until the end of October, more than 800 suspected cases were reported with 200 of them confirmed.

The Cheng Hsin Rehabilitation Center established by Madame Chiang Kai-hek for polio children in May 1967 has grown to a large facility now accepting patients with cerebral palsy and amputations and offering evaluation and some prevocational training for persons up to 25-years-old. It will soon be expanded into a National Orthopedic Center for persons of all ages.

There are about twenty or so prosthetic and brace shops in Taiwan. One of the leading ones, the Rehabilitation Center at the Veterans General Hospital, is presently completing, under the sponsorship of the World Rehabilitation Fund, its second International Training Course for prosthetists and orthotists from Asian and Pacific countries.

There are two public and one private residential schools for the blind with 322 students from first to twelfth grades, three public and one private schools for the deaf with 2,012 students, one public

school for orthopedically handicapped students with an enrollment of 184, and one public and one private residential schools for 264 moderately mentally retarded students. The emphasis, however, is being placed more and more on integrating disabled students whenever possible into regular schools. Last school year, 622 blind students attended classes in regular schools; 24 primary and junior middle high schools had 40 special classes for 416 hearing impaired students; 32 special classes were set up at 11 schools for severely orthopedically impaired students; while there was a total of 424 special classes for 4,506 mentally retarded students in 225 schools. There are thirty-five deaf or blind students being enrolled as freshmen in colleges and universities this year after screening conducted by the Ministry of Education, in addition to many orthopedically impaired students who passed the nationwide joint college and university entrance examination.

The Taiwan Provincial Government has recently set up two homes for the mentally retarded, one in central Taiwan and the other in the south. It is also establishing a vocational training center in the north. The Taipei Municipal Government is in the process of opening a 300-bed home for the severely disabled and scheduled to start its operation at the end of December 1982 and the Kaohsiung Municipal Government is planning to establish a school to accommodate disabled students with various kinds of disabilities.

As part of its preparation for the implementation of the Welfare Act for the Disabled, The Ministry of Interior from June 1981 through January 1982 had a total of 39 public and private organizations and homes rendering rehabilitation services evaluated. A survey and evaluation report was issued on May 25, 1982.

Since 1974 the government has assisted about 2,500 persons with disabilities to receive vocational training by referring them to the Rehabilitation Center at the Veterans General Hospital, the Taiwan Industrial Training Association and the Taipei Goodwill Industries, Inc. The Veterans General Hospital Center this year has doubled into

enrollment to 120 and is offering yearlong courses instead of the previous six months only. Next year it will move to a brand new facility.

This year the government in implementing the Welfare Act for Disabled is sponsoring vocational training courses at the Veterans General Hospital Rehabilitation Center and the Cheng Hsin Rehabilitation and Medical Center in the fields of shoe-making, tailoring, mechanical and lathe-operating. Many private and missionary organizations and groups are providing training classes for watch-repairing, television- and radio-repairing and assembling, typing, and printing. In Taitung in southeast Taiwan the government has given a very large subsidy to a private technical school run by Catholic missionaries from Switzerland to establish a residential training school for over 200 disabled students.

In the private sector, many rehabilitation centers are involved in vocational counselling and/or training, such as the Hui Ming Blind Children Home, Taiwan Blind Rehabilitation Center and Mon Kuang Blind Children Center for the blind; Taipei Rehabilitation Service Center, Taiwan Christian Services Center, Changhwa Bo Ai Training Center, and Suao Jen-Ai Service Center for the Handicapped, Christian Hospitals' Rehabilitation Centers and Homes, and the Taipei Operation De-Handicap for persons with orthopedic disabilities; the Provincial Lo Sheng Leprosarium and Taiwan Leprosy Relief Association for those with leprosy; the Taipei Mentally Retarded Association and many private and missionary organizations for those with mental retardation. The ratio of governmental to private voluntary agencies is about one to four.

In general, the Rehabilitation Medicine Association, the National Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled and the Special Education Association of the Republic of China take the coordination responsibilities in the fields of medical, social and vocational, and educational activities respectively.

There are almost no sheltered workshops anywhere in Taiwan. The government, however, is planning to set up a large one in Hsinchu

in the near future as a pilot project. The government is presently conducting a project to encourage private factories to work together with the government setting up sheltered shops at their factory compounds with government subsidies amounting to NT\$15,000,000 (US\$375,000).

During the International Year of Disabled Persons, some major activities were the issuance of a commemorative set of postage stamps, a Taiwan Area Handicapped Athletic Games and Self-Reliance Activities Program with special exhibits of educational materials, a forum on International Special Education at the National Normal University, a national competition for industrial skills, a Sino-American Conference on Special Welfare Development, Love and Concern Weeks held in various cities and a seminar on Special Physical Education and Welfare for Handicapped Persons. Seven persons with disability went to Japan to take part in the Abilympics coming back two Gold and one Bronze Medals.

In April-May, 1982, the Rehabilitation Medicine Association, the Republic of China sent 10 artworks of six disabled artists to participate in the Sister Kenny Institute's 19th Annual International Art Show by Disabled Artists in the United States and gained two awards--the Third Place and an Honorable Mention in the Graphics Category. Later, in July, the First National Art Show by Disabled Artists was conducted in Taipei under the co-sponsorship of the Rehabilitation Medicine Association and the National Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled. Famous songstress Chen Ni and others performed charity shows to raise funds for the benefit of the nation's aged and disabled.

As a sign that the momentum of the IYDP is continuing, the Interior Ministry recently sponsored five five-day seminars on rehabilitation for the personnel of public and private social welfare and rehabilitation agencies; the Taipei Municipal Social Welfare Department held two five-day seminars for local personnel and the Kaohsiung Municipal Social Welfare Department conducted a three-day camping seminar for

persons in its area.

On the negative side, a big shortcoming is the fact that there is yet no special government agency to deal specifically with disabled persons for their total rehabilitation. There are still practically no efforts being made to do anything about the almost universal architectural barriers in public and private buildings, parks and sidewalks, etc. Transportation problems for those with severe mobility limitations are very serious. People in general are becoming more aware of persons with disabilities and of their difficulties and needs, but this awareness has yet to make much notable impact on the attitudes of employers or on the public in general toward persons with disabilities.

In spite of these shortcomings, Fr. Robert J. Ronald, S.J., the Delegate of both the Rehabilitation Medicine Association and the National Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, of the Republic of China to the 9th Annual Meeting Rehabilitation International Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific in Papua New Guinea unhesitatingly affirms, "I can say that in the twenty-five years I have lived in Taiwan and especially in the last eleven years in which I have worked in rehabilitation, I have seen continuous progress in every area. The future for Rehabilitation in the Republic of China Taiwan Region, looks brighter than ever."