

10-2

A Brief Summary of the Work of the Wassermann Laboratory
for the year 1919.

The activities of the Wassermann Laboratory have not been unusual during the present year. There have been a few minor changes in personnel designed to make the work more efficient and less expensive. For example, an assistant bacteriologist employed at a beginning rate of \$1500.00 per year has been replaced by a laboratory assistant at \$900.00 per year. By careful training this assistant has been taught to do most of the work formerly done by the higher paid individual without detracting from the quality of the work and in some instances greatly adding to it.

The activity of the United States Public Health Service in Venereal Disease Control has shown the desirability of statistical data with regard to both syphilis and gonorrhea. Although the Wassermann laboratory has had a wealth of this material to work on, it has been handicapped because of lack of clerical assistance. This work, however, is now proceeding with rapidity and it is hoped that at a very early date, valuable statistical data will be in form for publication.

The following table indicates the routine examinations and their number:--

COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF SPECIMENS TESTED DURING THE YEAR 1918 & 1919		
Wassermann tests.....	27,534	31,485
Gonococcus Fixation tests....	-----	221

DIAGNOSTIC EXAMINATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY.

a) Complement Fixation tests for glanders:	646	122
b) Agglutination tests for glanders:	215	---

c) Examinations for rabies:

61

84

e) Pathologic & Bacteriologic examinations.

45

79

The number of tests and examinations performed in most instances exceeds that of last year. The only exception being in the case of tests for glanders. The decrease in the number of glanders tests is due to the fact that very few cases of this disease have been suspected in horses and mules during the past year.

Annual Report for the year 1919.

WASSERMANN LABORATORY.

The activities of the Wassermann Laboratory have not been unusual during the past year. There have been a few minor changes in personnel designed to make the work more efficient and less expensive. For example, an assistant bacteriologist employed at a beginning rate of \$1500 per year has been replaced by a laboratory assistant at \$900.00 per year. By careful training this assistant has been taught to do most of the work formerly done by the higher paid individual without detracting from the quality of the work and in some instances greatly adding to it.

The activity of the United States Public Health Service in Venereal Disease Control has shown the desirability of statistical data with regard to both syphilis and gonorrhea. Although the Wassermann Laboratory has had a wealth of this material to work on, it has been handicapped because of lack of clerical assistance. This work, however, is now proceeding with rapidity, and it is hoped that at a very early date valuable statistical data will be in form for publication.

The following table indicates the comparative number of the different tests during the years 1918 and 1919:

Table I		
	1918	1919
Wassermann tests	27,534	31,485
Gonococcus Fixation tests	---	222
Diagnostic Examinations for the		
Dept. of Animal Industry:		
a) Complement Fixation tests for glanders	646	122
b) Agglutination tests for glanders	215	---
c) Examinations for rabies	61	84
d) Pathologic and Bacteriologic examinations	45	79

The number of tests and examinations made for the year 1919 is greater than that of the previous year in every case with the exception of diagnostic examinations for glanders. This exception is

due to the fact that very few cases of glanders have been suspected in domestic animals during the past year.

A law was passed in 1917 requiring that certain laboratory tests be made (that the Department of Health might direct) upon the inmates of houses of correction, jails and similar institutions. As a result of the enforcement of this law, an unusual number of Wassermann tests have been made upon the inmates of these institutions. All told thirteen houses of correction and courts have requested a Wassermann test. The total number of specimens upon which a satisfactory test was made for these agencies were 1,485 of which 241 or 16% were positive, and 61 or 4.1% were doubtful. Assuming that the rate of positivity is from 5% to 8% for the population of Massachusetts in general, it is obvious that the criminal class is a real menace to the community from the point of view of the spread of syphilis.

The State Approved Venereal Clinics outside of Boston with one exception have had their Wassermann tests made in the State Laboratory. The total number of specimens submitted from this source during the year was 1,303.

Scientific medicine has given public health officials knowledge upon which laws may be drafted adequate to properly control syphilis. This is not the case with gonorrhea. The treatment of this disease from the venereal aspect is far from satisfactory while the diagnosis in many instances especially females is notoriously uncertain. The gonococcus fixation test is proving in our hands a valuable aid in the diagnosis of the disease. However, it is not hoped that this test

will entirely solve this aspect of gonorrhoea and for this reason it is desirable that funds be obtained with which to make a study of this very important public health problem. The Wassermann Laboratory is excellently equipped to carry out such research and possesses a personnel desirous of studying the problem. It simply needs a small additional amount of money and the authority to undertake its study.

Respectfully submitted,