

J. C. M. P.

10 December 1982

## Action to curb hospital rats

Anti-rat measures have been stepped up at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, following complaints to the SCM Post by female patients who said the rodents had been running around in the wards.

Hygiene procedures have been tightened up at the 3,400-patient hospital in Kowloon, the authorities say, and several new measures have been introduced to try to stamp out the menace.

Visitors are being urged to bring less food in for relatives in the hospital, new ratbait poison has been laid out around the 30-acre site and the hospital's rubbish is to be collected twice a day instead of in a single collection.

Action has also been taken to clear up a lot of the rubbish which was scattered around the site and staff have been instructed to tidy up and avoid leaving dirty linen lying unattended.

Last month the SCM Post revealed that women patients had complained of rats in their rooms. The women said they were afraid to leave their beds at night.

But the authorities replied that it was not unusual for rats to come into hospitals.

Medical and Health Department chiefs visited the hospital after the complaints were published and reporters were yesterday shown the rat traps that have been placed in the kitchens and working areas of the hospital.

A spokesman said 39 rats had been caught in the three months up to the end of September — the average is 20 a quarter, though in June last year 57 rats were caught in a single month.

Two weeks ago a female patient claimed she had been bitten by a rat in her room. Nurses who looked for the culprit were unable to find any rats, the spokesman said.

But one source confirmed yesterday that the nurses often see rats climbing up the

outside of the building looking for a way in.

He added that the 20-year-old hospital is overcrowded and is "a rat's haven" because there is not enough storage space for used linen and rubbish.

The Urban Services Department has now agreed to remove the hospital's rubbish twice daily to try to reduce the problem until a new collection centre is built.

"We hope these measures will improve the situation. Pest control has been going on all the time, but I don't think there is a building in Hongkong that does not have rats," the hospital spokesman said.

He said reports of dirty linen lying around in the corridors were distorted, as they referred to a Sunday when the laundry was closed. A cupboard which was reportedly stuffed with rubbish has been cleaned up, he added.

Posters are being put up around the hospital urging relatives to bring as little food as possible because of the way the leftovers attract rats.