

documented that he took steps to reduce the patient population while repeatedly making requests for more funds. These efforts failed for the most part.

"Nevertheless, he attempted to remedy the situation in some manner.

"Since Dr. Hammond's efforts to improve matters were largely frustrated, the 'choking' and other accidental deaths must be characterized (distasteful as it may sound) as being unavoidable."

Gruber
Kahn

staff
flow

Case histories of tragedy

Two cases of patients who died of accidental causes at Willowbrook State School were described in District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr.'s report as exemplifying "the difficulty in caring for and supervising severe and profoundly retarded patients."

Braisted said, "These patients need constant supervision and can easily be stricken if left alone for even a short period of time."

One case involved what the report called a "typical" choking death. The patient, a

15-year-old boy, was found dead in his dormitory shortly after he had eaten supper.

Continuing, the report said: "He suffered from profound retardation caused by epilepsy. His IQ was 13. He could not talk and did not show any awareness. He needed complete supervision and care in his daily needs, which included having to be fed by the attendant.

On Oct. 17, 1971, the boy was found dead by the attendant who had gone to get him for his shower. The autopsy revealed the cause of death to

be asphyxia in the upper part of the larynx caused by vomitus material.

Another case is that of a 23-year-old patient who was found dead on the floor of a hall in Building 7. Here again, the cause of death was a bolus of food lodged in the throat.

The attendant in charge stated that this particular patient was the first to leave the dining room after eating while she was busy feeding other patients. This youth was unable to feed or dress himself and had an IQ of 19. He was also unable to talk."