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AS AN essential procedure in the medical evaluation of nutritional status there has been a need for a method of detecting subclinical stages of avitaminosis A. In the fourth paper of the series from the nutrition project in New York City, Dr. H. D. Kruse reports on the "Ocular Manifestations of Avitaminosis A, with Especial Consideration of the Detection of Early Changes by Biomicroscopy." Presenting observations on the changes in the conjunctiva, the site affected earliest in the eye, the paper describes the lesions in various stages of development and severity, from very early to far-advanced. The biomicroscopic examination for the initial and mild conjunctival changes permits detection of subclinical avitaminosis A. It is a simple, convenient, rapid, objective method.

Dietary inquiries have indicated that inadequate intake of vitamin A is one of the more common dietary deficiencies. But evidence of widespread avitaminosis A, as determined from examination of persons, has not previously been presented. The paper presents data on the prevalence of this avitaminosis on a low-income group which bears out the indications from dietary studies. It is also shown that recovery under intensive therapy is complete only after some months.



Methods for the diagnosis of several nutritional deficiencies in their early or mild stages make it possible now to determine with a high degree of accuracy the prevalence and severity of some of the important deficiency diseases. In a report entitled, "Prevalence of Deficiency Diseases in Their Subclinical Stages," from the cooperative investigation, Medical Evaluation of Nutritional Status, Dorothy G. Wiehl and H. D. Kruse have summarized the results of examinations on about 1,000 persons in New York City. The findings for persons of high and of low economic status are in sharp contrast; and the high prevalence of malnutrition in the low-income groups can leave no doubt as to the need for an intensified and improved effort against this public health problem.