

ANNOTATIONS

CHRONIC ILLNESSES TAKE A TOLL¹

THE problem of chronic illness has been given increasing attention in the literature of public health. A recent contribution to the field is an article entitled "Chronic Illnesses Take a Toll" by C. H. Hamilton. The article is a report of a study of health and health services in Wake County, North Carolina. Approximately 2 per cent of the families residing in that county were interviewed for the study. The sample included rural and urban, white and nonwhite families.

It was found that the prevalence of chronic illness in the observed population was 158 per 1,000 persons. The most frequent type of chronic illness was circulatory disease which accounted for 27 per cent of the total chronic illness.

The prevalence of chronic illness was shown for various classifications of the surveyed population. These classifications included age, sex, urban or rural residence, and income.

Age. The characteristic increase in the prevalence of chronic illness with increase in age was evident. The prevalence at all ages was higher than that at specific ages until age 45. The prevalence at ages 45-64 was twice as high as that at all ages and the prevalence at age 65 and older was almost four times as high as the prevalence at all ages.

Sex. The prevalence of chronic illness was shown by sex for persons aged 18 years and older. Females between the ages of 18-44 and 45-64 had 70 per cent more chronic illness than did males of the same ages. After age 65, however, males had slightly more chronic illness than did females.

¹ Hamilton, C. H.: Chronic Illnesses Take a Toll. *Research and Farming*, Spring, 1951, Vol. ix, Progress Report No. 4, pp. 11-12.

Urban or Rural Residence. Compared with urban residents "the chronic illness rates were found to be higher for rural-farm and rural-nonfarm groups, particularly among people over 65 years of age."

Income. The prevalence of chronic illness increased as income decreased. "Families with incomes of \$1,500 per year or less averaged 191 chronic illnesses per 1,000 population. Those with incomes of \$4,000 or more averaged 126 per 1,000."

The cost of caring for the chronically-ill person presents a serious problem to low-income families. It was found that 7.7 per cent of those with chronic illness were hospitalized at some time during the six-month period prior to the study. The average amount paid for medical care for the chronically-ill patient during the same period was \$45.18.

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TRENDS IN ILLNESS AND MORTALITY¹

"THE longest series of data available on trends of both illness and death is for soldiers in the United States Army for the 130 years since 1820." These data have been presented in a paper entitled: "Trends in Illness and Mortality," by Selwyn D. Collins. The paper also gives data on illness trends among industrial employees for the period 1915 to 1950; tuberculosis mortality in 27 countries for the period 1910 to 1950; and infant mortality in 28 countries for the same period.

U. S. Army Data. The data for the U. S. Army were shown by ten-year periods and by single years. When shown by ten-year periods the data reveal that rates for both illness and death declined greatly over the 130 year period under study. A comparison of the two shows that death rates declined even more rapidly than illness rates. When the data were shown for single years it was evident that although illness decreased with the years, there were periods when there was a sudden rise in rates. These outstanding peaks coincided with three wars: the Civil

¹ Collins, Selwyn D.: Trends in Illness and Mortality. *Public Health Reports*, May, 1952, 67: No. 5, pp. 497-503.