

INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

(Exclusive of Maori unless otherwise stated.)

The following table shows the average death-rate of some of the principal epidemic diseases from the quinquennia period of 1872-86.

Average Death-rates per 10,000 of Mean Population.

Quinquennia.	Typhoid Fever.	Measles.	Scarlet Fever.	Whooping- cough.	Diphtheria.	Influenza.	Total.
1872-76	5.09	2.07	1.05	3.48	6.08	0.38	18.15
1882-86	2.44	0.68	0.83	2.55	3.18	0.17	9.85
1892-96	1.67	1.59	0.06	1.59	2.58	2.07	9.56
1902-06	0.66	0.75	0.51	0.85	0.58	1.15	4.50
1912-16	0.45	0.42	0.24	0.72	0.90	0.68	3.41
1922-26	0.23	0.13	0.08	0.32	0.53	1.43	2.72
1932-36	0.05	0.09	0.04	0.26	0.20	0.82	1.46
1937	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.16	0.73	1.11
1938	0.05	1.07	0.01	0.14	0.20	0.88	2.35

It is satisfactory to note the reduction in death-rates of this group of diseases particularly since 1900, when public-health administration was placed on a sure foundation by the creation of a Department of Health under the control of a Minister of the Crown with a Chief Health Officer, District Health Officers, Sanitary Inspectors, &c.

The total number of cases of notifiable diseases in 1938 was 3,790, as compared with 4,230 in 1937. Apart from the measles epidemic, the Dominion was comparatively free from other infectious diseases.

Scarlet Fever.—There were 662 notifications of scarlet fever with 2 deaths, in comparison with 924 cases and 6 deaths in 1937. The death-rate was 0.01 per 10,000 (0.04 in 1937).

Diphtheria.—Seven hundred and eighty-six cases of diphtheria were notified in 1938, as compared with 599 in 1937. Thirty-one deaths were recorded, giving a death-rate of 0.20, as compared with 24 deaths and a rate of 0.16 in 1937.

Immunization of school and pre-school children against diphtheria has been carried out, particularly in the Waikato, Manawatu, and Wellington Health Districts. Dr. F. S. Maclean, Medical Officer of Health, in reporting on the Wellington City campaign states:—

“In view of the undue prevalence of diphtheria during the past year it was considered advisable to begin an active campaign of immunization in Wellington as soon as staffing arrangements permitted. As the services of Dr. Wyn Irwin became available in February of this year the campaign was opened soon after the beginning of the new school year, and considerable progress has already been made. The response of parents has been most gratifying. The schools so far dealt with include Mount Cook School, St. Anne's and Buckle Street Convents, and Taranaki Street Free Kindergarten. The school rolls totalled 1,035, and 829 consents were received, giving a percentage of 80. Consents were also given in respect of 110 pre-school children in the same area. Schick testing was carried out on 730 children, and of these, 128 were Schick negative. The Moloney test was made on 776 children, and of these, 5 gave sufficiently severe reactions to be excluded from further treatment.”

Dr. D. Cook, Medical Officer of Health, Palmerston North, advises:—

“The incidence of this disease was high in the Wellington-Hawke's Bay Health District, particularly during the months of May, June, July, and August, and on three occasions in that period the disease almost reached epidemic proportions. The incidence of the disease was highest in the Hawke's Bay area, and to combat it immunization was resorted to. The children of the Waipawa School, where two deaths had occurred, were the first to be inoculated, and after it the schools mostly effected in Napier and Hastings were attended to. The campaign of inoculation is still continuing, and a relatively high proportion of the children of each school are being immunized. Shannon school-children were the only ones outside the Hawke's Bay area that were inoculated, but it is proposed to immunize as many school-children as possible this year in the Palmerston North-Wanganui portion of the health district.”

Dr. H. B. Turbott, Medical Officer of Health, Hamilton, writes:—

“Of the 57 cases in 1938, 6 only were in Maoris. One death occurred in a European. The mass-immunization campaign throughout the health district, begun in 1937, was continued and finalized in 1938. 17,531 children were offered immunization with anatoxin. Parents consented in 10,034 cases, and these were duly dealt with before the end of the year. The main effect of this campaign, which has resulted in 52.7 per cent. of the school population being assured of protection, will be to popularize diphtheria-prevention. It is planned to continue immunization in future years by offering protection at the medical inspection at the school to all entrant and pre-school children whose parents consent.”

A report of this work by Dr. Helen Deem and Dr. H. B. Turbott appears as an appendix to this report.