

TUBERCULOSIS AMONG INDIANS

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The following is from an address delivered by Dr. C. D. Fulkerson at a meeting in Salem conducted by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis:

For some days we have been discussing the subject of Tuberculosis—its cause, means of prevention, remedial measures, etc. We find that it is the cause of more deaths than any other disease that afflicts mankind. All races pay their toll, but some are more susceptible than others and the mortality greater. The Indian race is very susceptible.

A few years ago their percentage of deaths was sixteen times greater than that of the white race. All tribes now have this disease. It is said that a few years ago the Indians of the Navajo Spring Agency, Colorado, were free; but now even this tribe is not exempt. We find it among the Indians of the colder regions of Alaska and the hot climate of the Southwest; in the mountains and on the plains; in the dry and wet regions alike.

It is not so much a matter of where we live as how. It is not possible to obtain accurate statistics, but to the best of our knowledge it causes 95 per cent of the deaths among the Mohaves, 90 per cent among the Nez Perce, 66 per cent among the Pimas and Maricopas, and 75 per cent among the Havasupais and Walapais; it is less frequent but very fatal among the Apaches; there are few cases among the Zunis, but the mortality is almost 100 per cent.

The Sioux are a fine physical type, yet the mortality is as great as of other tribes. A few years ago Dr. Jas. Walker, of Pine Ridge reservation, S. D., read a paper before the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis in which he stated that the death rate among the Sioux Indians of this reservation was more than fifteen times greater than among the whites of the entire U. S. His record covered about 7,000 individuals and over a period of ten years. For two years I was one of the physicians of the adjoining Rosebud reservation and found conditions there similar.

The pulmonary, osseous, and lymphatic are the principal forms found. In some tribes the percentage afflicted by the lymphatic form is very great, especially among the children and young adults; the majority recover, but many are later attacked by the pulmonary form and succumb. Many adults show scars on the neck and jaws resulting from the destruction of lymphatic glands during childhood and youth.

Why is this disease more prevalent and fatal with the Indian than other races? It is comparatively a new disease to them; fifty years ago