

## RECORD OF HEALTH FOR COUNTY GOOD

Infant Mortality Rate, Indicative of Conditions, Notably Low

General health conditions in Marion county are good, it is indicated by the low infant mortality rate, which is usually regarded as the best indication of health conditions. The rate here was 42.5 per thousand born, as compared to 76 per thousand in the registration area.

These figures are included in the first annual report of the Marion county health unit for 1926, issued Thursday. The report, almost in full, is reprinted below:

The county health unit has just completed a physical audit of Marion county for the year 1926. We hear a great deal about the financial affairs of our community, but we seldom give consideration to its physical resources.

Vital statistics are usually considered a dry subject, but the Marion county health unit looks at them as the bookkeeping of life and death.

In presenting these vital accounts, the deaths in the state institutions have been excluded in order to give a true picture of health conditions among the residents of Marion county.

Attention has also been given to comparing the causes and number of deaths with the average for other parts of the United States, included in what is known as the registration area, by the United States census bureau.

### Births Exceed Deaths

The first consideration is our new arrivals for the year. There were 805 births in the whole county. When we consider that there were 544 deaths, we find that the net increase of population was 261.

It is interesting to learn that 335 of these youngsters decided to be born in Salem and 470 in the balance of Marion county. Of this number, 404 were boys and 401 girls.

While we have increased our population during the year, our

birth rate is considerably below that for the registration area for the United States. Apparently, babies do not increase as rapidly as crops in Oregon.

A consideration of the deaths is a more serious matter. They numbered 544 during the year. Of these, 208 were in the city of Salem and 336 in the county. One of the ways in which we compare roughly the health conditions is by means of the death rate per thousand of population. In the registration area of the United States this was 11.9, as compared with 11.4 for the whole of Marion county. The Salem rate is 12.2, while the rest of the county is 10.9.

A closer study of the individual causes of death is of more immediate importance. We are presenting below ten of the most important ones: Disease of heart, 104; cerebral hemorrhage and softening of brain, 67; kidney disease, 58; cancer, 51; accidental and unspecified external causes, 42; tuberculosis, (all forms), 28; pneumonia, (all forms) 35; congenital debility and diseases of early infancy, 20; influenza, 16; appendicitis and typhilitis, 9; Other causes of special interest—Typhoid fever, 1; smallpox, 2; measles, 0; scarlet fever, 0; Whooping cough, 2; diphtheria, 2.

It is important to notice both the numerical order and the individual diseases causing the largest number of deaths. Tuberculosis stands fifth in the list, only 3 of these 10 cases are from contagious or communicable diseases. Up until a comparatively recent time, tuberculosis caused more deaths than any single disease.

It should be noted that the place at the head of the list has now been taken by a group of diseases often called the "wear and tear" diseases, including heart and kidney disease and cancer, as well as accidental deaths. All of these have to do with our modern methods of living.

It is gratifying to note that for Marion county in 1926, diphtheria does not appear upon this list. In 1925 there were 19 deaths in the county from this disease. The death rates in Marion county exceed those of the registration area for the following diseases: heart and kidney disease, cerebral hemorrhage, cancer and accidents.

One of the most sensitive measurements of health conditions is

the infant mortality rate, which is measured by the number of children who die before they reach their first birthday in proportion to each 1,000 births.

In this field the whole Pacific coast has an excellent record, and Marion county stands well up on the list. The rate for the registration area, average 1921 to 1923, was 76 per thousand births; in Marion county in 1926 the rate was 42.5. This indicates that Marion county is a safe place to be born.

A study was made of the causes of 37 baby deaths to see whether further improvement in our rates could be expected. It was found that 62.2 per cent of these deaths occurred in infants not yet four weeks old. A careful analysis of the causes of this infant mortality showed that 43.2 per cent of the deaths were the result of conditions that are known to be operative before or at the time the children were born.

It is believed by physicians that a large percentage of these deaths can be prevented by improved care for the mother before and at the time the baby arrives. This is one of the activities in which the Marion County Child Health demonstration is cooperating with the local physicians.

### Organization of County Unit

In March, 1926, the Marion county health unit was organized through a cooperative agreement of the county court, city of Salem, and Salem board of education, with the assistance of the state board of control, and the Marion County Child Health demonstration. The funds already being expended by these official organizations were pooled, and a full time county unit established.

Each of these groups elected a member who was to serve on the executive committee of the county health unit. Representatives are as follows: Ellis Purvine, City of Salem, chairman; Judge J. T. Hunt, county court; Frank Neer, Salem school board.

This committee controls the expenditures of the unit and directs its policy. Dr. Walter H. Brown, director of the Marion County Child Health demonstration, has been officially appointed health officer, without salary, and Dr. Vernon A. Douglas, deputy health officer, on full time. The services of a clerk were furnished by the state board of health. The sanitary inspector, already employed by the city, works administratively with the unit.

The first activity of the unit was a careful survey of part time health services, which were already being furnished by each one of the cooperating agencies. These were combined under the one head and additional service is being furnished by the Marion County Child Health demonstration. The vital statistics were transferred to the unit from both the city and county. The headquarters of the unit is at 434 North High street, in the same building with the child health demonstration. The building is furnished by the Salem board of education.

One of the first problems demanding solution was a more systematic and effective control of communicable diseases. Consequently, definite effort has been made to increase the promptness and accuracy of reporting communicable diseases, methods of quarantine, and the following up of suspended cases. A complete set of records has been put into operation.

The unit has assumed responsibility for the quarantining and releasing of all cases of communicable disease. This system of control is carried out, however, in the city of Silverton and in the incorporated towns through the local health officer. By means of this

(Continued on page 5.)

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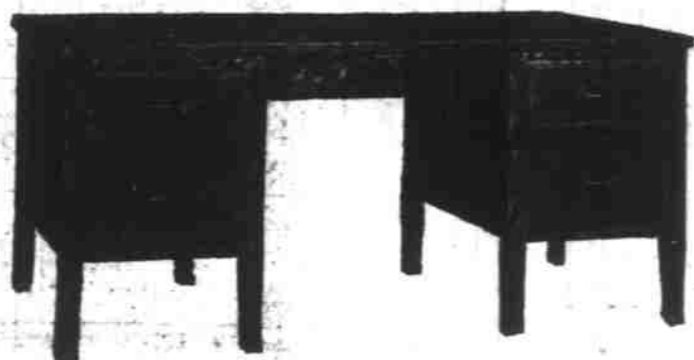
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