

REGISTRAR-GENERAL'S STATISTICAL REVIEW FOR ENGLAND AND WALES (PART 1) 1945.*

Publication of the Registrar-General's Statistical Reviews was delayed during the war, and the series is being brought up to date as rapidly as printing difficulties will allow.

The total number of deaths registered in England and Wales was 488,108, giving a crude death rate of 12.6 per 1,000 civilian population. The Comparative Mortality Index, which allows for the changing sex and age structure of the population and expresses the mortality of each year as a ratio to that of 1938, was only .893 and reveals 1945 as the healthiest year England and Wales had ever known.

Infant and Maternal Mortality.

The infant mortality rate, after having reached a new low record of 45.44 per 1,000 related live births in 1944, rose very slightly to 46.00 in 1945, but maintained the improvement evidenced during the war (Table 12). The neonatal (under 1 month) mortality rate was 24.8 compared with 28.3 in 1939; and at ages between 4 weeks and 1 year it was 21.2 compared with 24.5 (Table 15). Maternal mortality (excluding abortion) continued steadily to diminish, reaching 1.52 per 1,000 total births in 1944, and 1.47 in 1945.

Epidemic Diseases.

As a result of the progress of the immunisation campaign, only 694 deaths were attributed to diphtheria in 1945, and the death rate for children under 15 reached a new low level of 67 per million. The under 15 death rate of 7 per million for scarlet fever was also the lowest recorded, while the rate for whooping cough had been bettered only once. There was 445,412 notifications of measles during the year, by far the greatest number since the disease became notifiable, and the resultant death-rate of 80 per million living under 15, though high compared with the record rate of 28 per million in 1944, was noticeably below the pre-war average.

Respiratory Tuberculosis.

After the rise in mortality from respiratory tuberculosis in the early war years, thus following the same pattern as in the years 1914-16, the deaths from this disease began to fall again after 1940. Including deaths from non-civilians, only 20,013 deaths were registered in England and Wales in 1945 as against 23,660 in 1940 and 21,342 in 1943. This contrasted very favourably with the trend of the earlier war, when mortality showed a fresh rise in 1917 and was higher still in 1918.

Dysentery.

Annual Civilian Dysentery notifications increased suddenly to 6,389 in 1941 and continued to rise steadily throughout the war until 14,728 cases were notified by 1945. Deaths for 1945, however, numbered only 156 compared with 326 in 1941.

Cancer.

The mortality indexes for cancer in 1944 and 1945 were the lowest since 1924. This improvement is due to a progressive decline in the index for cancer in females from 1.009 in 1936 to .936 in 1945. The index in cancer for males on the other hand shows a progressive, though less regular increase from 1.001 in 1936 to 1.025 in 1945. Mortality from cancer of the lung continued to increase steadily during the war both in males and females.

Air Raids Deaths.

The majority of civilian war deaths in 1945 were caused by V2 rockets and, to a limited extent, by a new series of flying-bomb attacks launched from bases in Holland. Of the total of 2,404 deaths in England and Wales, 2,073 occurred in the South-East region, 1,875 being in Greater London.

STREPTOMYCIN—RESULT OF TRIALS.

The Ministry of Health recently announced that preliminary results of the streptomycin trials, organised by the Medical Research Council, have proved sufficiently encouraging to justify the view that, as available supplies of the drug permit, patients suffering from tuberculous meningitis or miliary tuberculosis should be given this opportunity of receiving treatment with the drug.

While streptomycin is the best drug at present available for the treatment of these conditions it prolongs life and relieves symptoms in only a proportion of the cases, and it is too early to say yet whether it ever produces a permanent cure.

The following is a list of the hospitals in England and Wales and Northern Ireland at which cases of tuberculous meningitis and miliary tuberculosis will be treated with streptomycin:—

ENGLAND.

Liverpool.—Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool (six children's beds); Royal Southern Hospital, Fazakerley (three adult beds).

Sheffield.—The Children's Hospital, Western Bank, Sheffield, 10.

Newcastle.—Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle.

Bristol.—The Bristol General Hospital, Bristol, 1.

Manchester.—The Royal Infirmary, Manchester.

Birmingham.—The Children's Hospital, Ladywood Road, Birmingham, 16; The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham (which takes adults; children are admitted to the Children's Hospital).

Leeds.—The General Infirmary, Leeds; St. James's Hospital, Leeds.

London.—The Middlesex Hospital, W.1; St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C.1; The London Hospital, E.1; St. Mary's Hospital, W.2; St. Thomas's Hospital, S.E.1; Guy's Hospital, S.E.1; Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, London, W.C.1.

WALES.

Cardiff.—The Cardiff Isolation Hospital.

NORTHERN IRELAND.

* *Belfast.*—The Whiteabbey Sanatorium, Whiteabbey, Belfast; Purdysburn Fever Hospital, Purdysburn, Belfast.

Similar arrangements are being made in Scotland and details will be announced shortly.

REVIEW.

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M. E. CURSITER.

* Registrar-General's Statistical Review for England and Wales, 1945 Tables, Part I Medical, H.M. Stationery Office, price 5s. 6d. net, 5s. 10d. post free.

† Baillière Tindall and Cox, 7 and 8, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2. Price 6s. net.

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