

MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY STUDIES IN CHILDREN IN RURAL GUATEMALAN COMMUNITIES.

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During the last 4 years morbidity and mortality data for children under 5 years of age have been collected in 8 rural communities in Guatemala. Diarrheal diseases occur at a rate of 391 per 100 from 6 to 11 months of age and decrease gradually with increasing age. Respiratory infections and childhood diseases follow in frequency. Diarrheal disease and kwashiorkor were found to be among the most common causes of death (17.5% and 18.5%, respectively). For the 1-4 age group alone 38% died with kwashiorkor and 25% with diarrheal disease. Kwashiorkor deaths not preceded by diarrhea appeared to be precipitated by some other infectious disease. No particular seasonal pattern was discovered for the other cause of death. Deaths due to respiratory infections were most common under 1 year of age. Deaths due to diarrheal disease were considered to be due to a combination of malnutrition and infection rather than to the infection alone. Similarly, most of the remaining deaths were from diseases which would not ordinarily have been fatal in well nourished persons. It is concluded that the excessive mortality in children under 5 must be attributed to the interaction between malnutrition and an infectious agent.

Abstracts, Fifth International Congress on Nutrition, September 1-7, 1960, Washington, D. C., p. 7. Publicación INCAP I-155