

GENERAL MORTALITY RATES—1924

U.S.A.		CANADA	
Cleveland	10.2	Toronto	10.3
Chicago	11.2		
Los Angeles	11.3		
Detroit	11.4		
New York	11.6		
Philadelphia	12.8		
St. Louis	13.6		
Boston	14.1		
Baltimore	14.4		
Pittsburgh	15.3	Montreal	14.8
Average	12.59		

An average of the ten American cities gives a rate of 12.5. If we were to attain this average rate, which seems a reasonable ambition, it would mean the saving of 1,500 lives every year, as compared with our present mortality rate.

One further statement to remind ourselves of the need and opportunity for health work. During 1924, there occurred 51 deaths from Typhoid Fever—a preventable disease; 101 deaths from diphtheria—a preventable and curable disease; 970 deaths from tuberculosis—a disease which can to a great extent be controlled; 3,151 deaths of children under one year of age, of which 1,086 (over one-third) were due to Diarrhoea and Enteritis. To those who ascribe our high infant death rate to large families and low wages, we would point out that neither of these explains away the deaths from Diarrhoea and Enteritis, which are due to ignorant mothers and impure milk, in the vast majority of cases.

We will all agree that such figures tell a story of preventable deaths that is a challenge to us. If we eliminate such deaths, it means also that for each death prevented, at least ten cases of severe illness will be avoided, with their accompanying pain, sorrow and expense. It means a tremendous decrease in physical disabilities, and loss of productive power. For the aim of health work is not merely to keep people alive for a few years longer, but to ensure for them health and happiness while they live.

We have, from the first, kept clearly in mind that the function of a voluntary health agency such as ours is to assist in developing a public opinion which will first create the demand for, and second, enable the municipal authorities to undertake a reasonable health programme; for it is our understanding that Health is a responsibility of the State, and, therefore, a voluntary health agency has a place in assisting, but not in relieving the State of its health responsibilities.

At the meeting of the members held November 18th, 1924, the report of the Committee on "Scope," which had been previously approved by the Directors and a copy sent to each member, was adopted, and has been the basis of our work since. We therefore make our report under its three main headings—Health Education, Surveys, Demonstrations.

1. HEALTH EDUCATION

It is necessary that all citizens know of the need for and the possibilities of health work, and so become interested in and supporters of such work and of their Health Department and health agencies. Also it is essential that everyone know the simple facts of personal hygiene, for even with the most efficient health departments, there always remain for each individual to attend to, for himself or herself, such personal responsibilities as body cleanliness, hours of sleep and recreation, and care of the teeth.