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# Extent of Illness and Use of Health Services in a South Missouri County

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## PREFACE

Scientific investigations of the social conditions and situations associated with the health of rural people have been carried on at the Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station without interruption for the past 20 years. The studies have been conducted by the Department of Rural Sociology as official station projects and as such have been reported to the people of the state and elsewhere as a public service. A considerable mass of information has been collected, the pertinent results of which have been published as bulletins, journal articles, speeches, and pamphlets. In addition, much supplementary material has been accumulated and has been systematically arranged to provide a useful reference for use in advising official agencies and voluntary associations in the fields of health and welfare.

The early studies in rural health were, properly, concerned with inventories of health resources, plotting the location of personnel and institutions in relation to population distribution, the computation of population-health personnel ratios, and measures of the extent to which existing health facilities were used. It has been found useful to repeat these studies periodically. A next important step in rural health research was the development of a method of studying the incidence of rural morbidity by the use of small samples. More recently, the members of the research staff have come to believe that the next logical step involves intensive study of socio-economic factors influencing family and individual behavior with respect to health improvement and maintenance. Previous work in the Department of Rural Sociology has delineated areas of rural social homogeneity which have now been taken individually to form "locales" of study. It is hypothesized that (1) the provision of health services varies with the cultural areas of the state; and (2) the attitudes of acceptance or rejection of scientific medical services by rural people are related to their degree of isolation.

The present bulletin provides information on the use of health services and the extent of illness in a county of one cultural area. Along with others in the series, it is intended to build knowledge of health behavior which has been somewhat obscure.

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