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Vital News

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The Bookkeeping of Humanity

J. N. Hurty, Phar.D., M.D., Indianapolis
October 1, 1910

The accurate collection, tabulation and analysis of records of births, still-births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and sickness may be said to constitute the bookkeeping of humanity.

The bookkeeping of dollars is very important, but of far greater importance is the bookkeeping of those events in the lives of human beings which are fundamental to an understanding of the movements of mankind, and which are also fundamental to the practical application of hygiene, to secure higher efficiency, longer duration of life and fuller measure happiness. Without vital statistics, a nation cannot know its vital latitude and longitude, its national time of day on the great ocean of time. Through vital statistics a nation is able to know its temperature and pulse, and follow and understand other vital functions. Or, again, its vital potentialities are reflected and comprehensively expressed in such statistics.

To live a successful life, a man must notice the symptoms which forecast his demise, that he may take action to neutralize them or to prepare for his end; and so should a nation carefully collect and keep such checks and balances that tell of increase or decrease in numbers, and causes affecting the same, and which tell the status of social conditions, so that the question of living or dying may be rationally considered. We have this illustrated in the case of France, where lately vital statistics disclosed the fact that the death-rate exceeded the birth-rate, thus forecasting, if the conditions continued, the demise of a great nation.

Human life in its beginning, its duration and ending, is the predominant consideration in all personal, social, state and national problems. The standing of a nation is finally to be measured by the standard of human lives. No thoughtful person denies these facts. Yet, what a surprise it is, yes, a shock, to remember that we ignore in great degree these important matters. We do not fail to keep records of all legal procedures, of all commercial transactions, no matter how insignificant; we will deny ourselves needed rest and sleep to record a little or big real estate deal; we will keep careful minutes of a town meeting or of a social club; yet in many states a human being, made in the image of God and endowed with an immortal soul, can be born and can die without any public and frequently no private record of the fact. However, it is not so with animals and plants. For them, elaborate systems record their birth, entire career and death. Every pedigreed calf, colt, dog,

rooster, ram, and even cat, has its birth and death recorded: yet children, our hostages to fortune are born, and fathers and mothers die, without record. The National Government at the cost of millions annually maintains a Bureau of Animal Industry which looks after hog cholera, Texas fever and sheep rot, keeping accurate statistics; it also maintains at a cost of millions annually a Department of Agriculture, which collects crop statistics, beef, pork, poultry and mule statistics, but in not a single place in the whole country do we so accurately know the number of cases of diphtheria and the deaths from this cause among our babies.

Value of Vital Statistics to Medical Science

Medical science, like all other sciences, must, for its development, have coordination of the facts, and numerical expression must be given. In the numerical relations of recoveries to deaths, in the numerical relations of the destructiveness of the various diseases, in the numerical relation of diseases and deaths compared with various age periods, in the numerical relations of sex, nationality, social condition and occupations and employments, scientific medicine finds much valuable material for her advancement. All of these relations and also other facts are supplied by vital statistics. Every true physician is in love with his profession; he would have it make all advancement possible and will always lend his aid and services to such end. It follows then, that for the science he has adopted for his life work, if not in the service of his patients and if not in the service of society, he will gladly and eagerly contribute his part to vital statistics.

(Continued on page 2)

This article appeared in the Journal of American Medicine (JAMA) in 2010 and was written by a physician 100 years ago.

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Spotlight on... Clay County

Clay County is located in the northeast part of Florida and was created on December 31, 1858. Its name is in honor of Henry Clay, a famous American statesman, member of the US Senate and US Secretary of State in the 19th century. It was once a popular destination for tourists visiting from the northern states, including President Grover Cleveland.

Today, with a population over 190,000, the Clay County Vital Statistics team, Chief Deputy Registrar Sandy Young, Deputy Registrars Carol Kudlesky and Teresa Woerman keeps up the pace with their clients. With more than 27 years of combined experience, last year their office issued 4,203 birth certifications and 13,441 death certifications. They serve five funeral homes.

Small but strong, Clay County Vital Statistics! Keep up the great customer service!



Pictured (L-R): Deputy Carol Kudlesky, CDR Sandy Young, and Deputy Teresa Woerman

Divorces Going Up

No, we aren't saying that more people are getting divorced, but the number of Clerk of the Court offices who submit their divorce records electronically are definitely on the rise.

For the staff in the Clerk's offices, this translates into a real financial savings by eliminating the costs of printing, paper and printer ink/toner, and the costs of getting the records to our office here in Jacksonville. Whether by USPS or UPS or FEDEX, the mailing expenses alone are a savings. It is also a work saver as well; time spent printing, packaging and labeling paper record shipments each month is time that can now be spent serving their clients more efficiently.

It's not just the convenience factor that is contributing to this increase, but it also addresses an unforeseen problem with a new system recently put into place for the courts systems. Following the implementation of the e-filing/e-Portal system statewide, many Clerks' offices found that they no longer had a "paper" record for every divorce filing. Many couples utilized the services of an attorney who would then file the petition online. Florida statute requires that the divorce records be submitted to the state office by the tenth of each month for all the records recorded the previous month. How to do this when there is no paper became a real issue.

Not to be found lacking, the Bureau of Vital Statistics implemented a process of importing the records using a Secure File Transfer Protocol server (SFTP) whose function is to search the participating county's SFTP outbox several times a day. When the system finds a file, it moves it to our location where it is processed and entered automatically into the database. What would normally take several hours to print, package, label and mail can now be accomplished with just a few clicks of a mouse button.

There are currently 14 counties participating in the Electronic Divorce Data Transmittal (EDDT) project. Miami-Dade was the first county online followed by Bay, Citrus, Charlotte and Levy. Up next came Collier, Lee, Sarasota, Okaloosa, Nassau, Broward, Indian River, Hillsborough and Orange counties. These counties comprise over 50% of the total divorces filed in the state of Florida.

As of this writing, Duval, St. Lucie, Manatee, Lake, and Palm Beach counties are working to join their colleagues and we expect them to be fully online before mid-summer, raising the total to more than 65.4%.

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

Bookkeeping

Summary Conclusions

The importance of vital statistics to the family, to the state, and to medicine, can hardly be overestimated. The physician, the representative of the science of medicine is, except in instances, the only member of society who can supply information in regard to causes of deaths and the presence of infectious diseases. As it is of very great importance to the family that its births, deaths, and cases of infectious diseases be legally recorded, and as the family presumably pays for the physician's services, the physician, therefore, should not consider his services fully performed nor that he is entitled to his fee until the certificates which are of such great importance are duly made. And again, the physician should remember when reporting vital statistics, that he is giving obedience to the statutes of his state, on which he depends for protection; that he is protecting the helpless; that he is doing a general good, and that he is serving the science of medicine.

JAMA. 1910;55(14):1157-1159
Editor's Note: JAMA 100 Years Ago is transcribed verbatim from articles published a century ago, unless otherwise noted.

On the Road Again.... with Quality Assurance

Since January 2014, the field representatives of the Vital Statistics Quality Assurance (QA) team, Mary Boutte', Lorraine Kratz, Kathleen Patton, and Michele Watterson have been traversing Florida, demonstrating the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) and providing training to hospice physicians, making field visits to county health department vital statistics offices, training and assisting tax collectors offices with the e-Vitals birth issuance, and attending seminars and tradeshow, anywhere from regional funeral board meetings to medical examiners' commission meetings.

For the last several years, the QA team has trained the birth registrars on the Electronic Birth Registration System



(EBRS) and funeral directors medical examiners on EDRS.

And recently, the team was split into districts to be the primary point person for assisting our county vitals offices with issues that may arise. Records Registration Administrator Sharon Dover states, "What's old is new again." Back in the day, the QA field representatives were frequent visitors to the county offices. Being knee deep in the conversion of paper records to electronic; visiting the county offices was halted for a while. But with electronic registration in full swing, QA is back on the road again. And if we are in the area, we are not

opposed to delivering safety paper when the counties are in need.

CDR/DR Training - April 2014

The second quarter CDR/DR training for 2014 was held at the state office in Jacksonville, April 23rd – 25th. We received positive feedback, as well as suggestions from the wonderful group of participants in the training.

Obtaining valuable knowledge is the goal, but being able to network with your peers is always an opportunity that should not be passed up. A number of attendees have stated they are keeping in contact with one another. What a great benefit!

We'd like to congratulate the class from our Quarter 2 training: Alachua, Seminole, Broward, Columbia, Brevard, and Jefferson Counties. Your success makes the effort worthwhile.

One of the advantages of the trainings being held at the state office is the ability to draw from a variety of subject experts. We'd like to gratefully acknowledge our in-house experts for their contributions.

We have tentatively scheduled the next quarterly CDR/DR Training for July 16-18, 2014 and it will likely fill up fast, so if you have an interest in coming to the next training in Jacksonville, contact Mary Boutte' at (904) 359-6900 ext. 1020, or email mary.boutte@FLHealth.gov.

Please note that the training is developed for Vitals Statistics staff only, and access to e-Vitals is essential to the training.

Funeral Directors' Corner

- Funeral Directors - if assigning the record to an online physician, you must HARD SAVE the record in order for the doctor to access and complete; all demographic information must be complete before doing a hard save.
- For paper death records it takes up to two weeks before the record is in the system; if EDRS funeral home files a paper record, it cannot be accepted until confirmation is received that the state office approved the filing.

Chief Deputy Registrar Advisory Committee (CDRAC) Update

The Chief Deputy Registrar Advisory Committee has been busy participating in changes to multiple procedures and policies. As always, they had major input into the annual revision of the CDR Operations Manual. CDRs will continue to play a role in successful rollout of the Tax Collectors as they will continue to be the point person in training and monitoring.

We welcome the newest CDRAC members, Sonja Burford, CDR for Taylor County and Jane Gray, CDR for Volusia County. Other members include: CDRAC Chair and Columbia County CDR Willie Dean Mayo, Flagler County CDR Pat Kennedy, Osceola County CDR Gloria Robinson, Pinellas County CDR Jennifer West, Collier County CDR Mark Lemke, and Miami-Dade County CDR Lyana Icaza.

Welcome Aboard

The following appointments have been mad in the county health department:

Chief Deputy Registrars

Judith (Lynne) Langley.....Calhoun County
Gilma Carranza..... Gilchrist County

Local Registrar

Lisa McCafferty..... Citrus County

Errata

Correction to last issue's reporting of Florida's Top 20 Names for 2012 was for the year 2013.