

18 (1916)

An experimental test of the relation of sewage disposal to the spread of pellagra.**By J. F. SILER, P. E. GARRISON and W. J. MACNEAL.***[From the Robert M. Thompson Pellagra Commission of the New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital.]*

After a thorough survey of the whole community of Spartan Mills in the city of Spartanburg, S. C., an endemic center of pellagra conspicuous for the number of cases of the disease which had originated in it, the surface privies were replaced by a water-carriage system of sewage disposal in the latter part of 1913 and the first half of 1914. Subsequent to this change there has been observed a remarkable reduction in the incidence of pellagra in this community, such that during the pellagra season of 1916 only one new case has appeared among the, approximately, 2,000 residents upon the mill property and this one case originated in a house situated at the very margin of this sewered district and across the street from an unsewered house in which an old case of pellagra resided. Houses situated in the partly unsewered district adjacent to the mill property furnished several new cases of pellagra in 1916. Furthermore, many of the preëxisting pellagrins living on the mill property have suffered recurrence of the disease in 1916. The results of the experiment so far would seem to indicate very clearly that the improvement in sanitation has served to prevent the non-pellagrous population from contracting the disease, but has had relatively little influence upon the course of the disease in those who had previously contracted it. This result is quite in accord with the hypothesis announced by us in 1913,¹ in order to test which this experiment was undertaken.

The detailed discussion of this experiment may be expected to appear in the Archives of Internal Medicine as one of the present series of papers, constituting the third report of the Robert M. Thompson pellagra commission.

¹ Siler, J. F., Garrison, P. E. and MacNeal, W. J., Pellagra, A summary of the First Progress Report of the Thompson-McFadden Pellagra Commission. Presented at the Special Pellagra Conference at Spartanburg, S. C., Sept. 3, 1913; *Journ. A. M. A.*, Jan. 3, 1914, lxii, 8. *Ibid.*, The relation of methods of sewage disposal to the spread of pellagra. *Arch. Int. Med.*, 1914, xiv, 453.