

HEALTH AND AIR POLLUTION

A Study on a Limited Budget

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IN THE spring of 1950, the Public Health Service was requested by the Maryland State Department of Health to join with it in considering how it might use a limited sum of money to evaluate the health effects of long-continued air pollution. The department of health had been charged by the state legislature, through the governor's commission on noxious fumes, to make such a preliminary study and report within a specified short period of time.

Considering the circumstances of time, facilities and money, which it developed was \$5,000, it was agreed that the avenue of effort with the best possibility of fruitful results was a study of morbidity. Since factual data on morbidity in its relation to continued air pollution are sorely lacking, it was felt, too, that the information obtained through such a study would add materially to the present sum of knowledge.

In searching for a method for the morbidity study, various procedures were reviewed. Recognition was given to the method of obtaining data on the abnormal contents of the environmental air and simultaneously collecting morbidity information periodically, possibly from families or from practicing physicians or hospitals in the community. Such an undertaking, as well as other possible approaches to the problem, appeared to be too costly to be considered in this situation.

It was therefore decided that if data of *some* degree of validity were available on the condition of the environmental air of a community in the state, morbidity data, again of a limited nature, might be collected by the technic of making single visits to the families. It was found that such data on environmental air were available for one city in the state. Furthermore, the city was of such a size that the limited funds available could be used to survey a sample representing more than 5 per cent of the population.

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