

THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE SELF SUPPORTING AND PARTIALLY SUPPORTING COLLEGE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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The University of Oklahoma Infirmary files offer many opportunities for study in various fields. The health of one group of students is found to differ very markedly from that of another group. A further study of the environment and activities of the group might bring to light more factors contributing to the extensive illness of any one group. The reasons for undertaking the following study were two in number; first, because such a study had been conducted in other schools and colleges but not in Oklahoma, and second, because the health of the self supporting and partially supporting college students seemed to need an investigation at our institution.

In individuals of all classes, there is an inborn desire for advancement in education as well as other fields of work. "Where there is a will, there is a way." It is readily seen from statistics that an education is not confined to only the class who can easily afford this luxury. There is such a small income in many families that there is no place in the budget for the many hundreds of dollars required for a collegiate education. Consequently, each year sees many young men and women going out ready to undertake the task of earning their way through college.

There is a larger percentage of students in the University of Oklahoma who work caring for yards, caring for furnaces, student assistant help, nurse maids, assistant housekeepers, in summer work, and in numerous odd jobs to defray a part of their expenses, and these students we have classed as "partially supporting" students. In addition, for students who are unable to secure the money no other way, there is a University Loan Fund, built by contributions, from which students are allowed the freedom of borrowing at a low or no rate of interest, and which is to be paid back only after the student has secured a position after he leaves school. Many of the students who support, or help to support themselves, have the best scholastic ability, athletic ability, and popularity, while others assume an unimportant role in college, but usually attain distinction after leaving the campus, making for themselves and their alma mater an enviable record. Taking it all in all, the self supporting student has a much more rigorous routine to pursue, and the partially supporting student a fairly more rigorous routine throughout their college career, than the independent, or non-self-supporting colleague. The student who has responsibilities outside his school course is forced to forego some of the so-called social or outside activities of college life, and really does more work than the independent class mate. Having more responsibilities, he has less opportunity to indulge in the opportunities of collegiate life, and undoubtedly suffers more from fatigue and lack of social activities than his financially carefree colleague.

The student's future is influenced a great deal by his collegiate experience. A college education obtained in an atmosphere where there is no thought of the finances, opens up many interesting problems, surely, but the

present study deals chiefly with the health of the self supporting and the partially supporting college student compared with that of the independent students.

This report has been worked out at the University of Oklahoma by a detailed study of the health records of the entire student body. The study includes the records of all students, with no exceptions, who enrolled in the regular session of the University of Oklahoma during the year of 1928-1929.

The University of Oklahoma Infirmary Register contains a record of all illness occurring in the student body which was severe enough to require hospitalization for one day or more, regardless of the physician treating the case. In addition to this, the Infirmary, the physician for women, and the physician for men, have records of the very large percentage of ambulatory illness occurring in the student body during this year. These records were used in compiling this data.

Whether they were self supporting, partially supporting, or independent was secured from the information cards left on file in the Registry Office of the University of Oklahoma. These cards are brought up to date each time the student enrolls in school, and it is assumed that a fairly accurate count has thus been made of these students.

The 5589 students entering the University in September 1928 constitute the group in which the study was made. Sixty-six per cent of these were men (3673), and thirty-four per cent were women (1916). One thousand six hundred and fifty-eight (29 per cent) were partially supporting; 1257 (22 per cent) were self supporting and 49 per cent were independent.

In the period with which we have dealt, no disease, except the influenza, reached epidemic proportions, and this was no more serious than it is annually in this part of the country, and the health of the student body as a whole was good. As a means of estimating the health of the groups studied, the following factors were considered; (1) the number of times the members of the group made visits to the student clinic for consultation and treatment; (2) the number of upper respiratory infections, such as influenza, bronchitis, colds, etc., occurring in the group; (3) the number of days members of the group spent in the hospital or infirmary as bed patients, and (4) the number of miscellaneous illness, such as appendicitis, and infections or injuries of various kinds, occurring to different members of the group.

AMBULATORY ILLNESS

Eight hundred and fifty-four visits were made to the student clinic for consultation and treatment by the 1257 self supporting students. This represents a rate of 680 clinic visits per thousand of self supporting students. Of the 1658 partially supporting students, 1152 clinic visits were made, representing a rate of 695 per thousand students. The 2674 independent students made a total of 1340 clinic visits, or a rate of 502 per thousand, this being a smaller rate than either of the above figures.

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

The commonest type of illness among college students is the infections of the upper respiratory tract including the common cold, bronchitis, influenza, pharyngitis, and laryngitis. In the group of 1257 self supporting students, there occurred 290 upper respiratory infections sufficiently severe to bring the students to the health service for treatment. In the group of 1658 partially supporting students there were only 190, the former giv-

ing a rate of 230 per thousand, and the latter a rate of 114 per thousand. There occurred 139 upper respiratory infections in the group of 2674 independent students, giving a rate of 52 per thousand. Thus the self-supporting group shows a much higher rate per thousand than either of the two other groups in respiratory infections as influenza, etc., during the year.

HOSPITAL ILLNESS

The best standard, probably, by which to judge the health of the University of Oklahoma student, is the total number of days he is confined as a bed patient in the hospital. It is well to remember that at the University of Oklahoma as well as at other educational institutions, where the preventative side of medicine is emphasized, a higher percentage of the illness is hospitalized than it is possible in the average general population group of this age distribution (17-25), and because of the hospital facilities at our institution, there is a very complete hospitalization of illness among the students. At the University of Oklahoma, each student, when he enrolls, pays an infirmary fee of \$2.50, along with the other fees, which entitles him to two weeks of free hospitalization. This will probably account for the great number of students who go to the infirmary and rest for a day or so. On analysing our statistics, we find that out of the self supporting students, 634 days were spent in the hospital, a rate of 505 per thousand. The partially supporting group spent 772 days in the hospital—or a rate of 465 per thousand. The 2674 students in the Independent group totaled 1286 days in the hospital—a rate of 482 per thousand, a little higher than the partially supporting group.

Parallel with this study it might be interesting to compare the male and female illness in the University.

MISCELLANEOUS

We have made into this group of illness, everything outside of the upper respiratory infections, as malaria, appendicitis and operations, furuncles, infection, injuries, etc.

The 1036 self supporting men spent 492 days in the hospital—a rate of 475 per thousand. There were only 142 days spent in the hospital by the self supporting women, but a high rate of 643 per thousand. The partially supporting men spent 595 days in the hospital, at a rate of 420 per thousand, while the 242 partially supporting women spent 177 days in the hospital (rate of 731 per thousand). Five hundred and sixty-five days were spent in the hospital, a rate of 463 per thousand, by the 1221 independent men. As shown by the statistics, the 1453 independent women had a rate of 497 per thousand, their number of hospital days being 721. From this we may see that the self supporting and the partially supporting women average the highest number of hospital days, while the partially supporting men have the highest figures of the groups of men.

It was deemed best not to discard these as nothing and have no count whatever of them, but to make a separate and distinct group, totaled for each group as for the other factors, and this group we have called the "mis-

cellaneous". It is interesting to note that with the exception of the partially supporting women, who had a high rate of 104, the rate per thousand of these ran within 9 points of each other, the total self supporting being a rate of 58, the totally partially supporting being 49, and the total independent, a rate of 50 per thousand. The range of the total men and women in this connection was very close, the men having a rate of 49 per thousand, and the women 57 per thousand.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The independent men make many more clinic visits than the independent women, but the self supporting and partially self supporting women make many more than the partially supporting and self supporting men.

2. In every case, whether independent, partially supporting or self supporting the women have a higher rate per thousand of upper respiratory infections.

3. With the exception of the self supporting women, the independent men and women, self supporting men, and the partially supporting men and women average about the same rate per thousand in miscellaneous illnesses, while the self supporting women *double* the rate of each of the other groups.

4. The women have a higher rate than the men of hospital days, the former being 543, and the latter 450.

5. A greater percentage of men make visits to the student clinic for consultation and treatment, than women, the men having a rate of 624 per thousand, and the women 550 per thousand.

6. The rate of upper respiratory infections for the self supporting students is four and a half times as great as that for the independent students while for the partially supporting students, it is only twice as great.

Table 1. Showing rate per thousand students of clinic visits, respiratory infections, hospital days and miscellaneous illnesses.

	Clinic Visits	Resp. Inf.	Hosp. Days	Misc.
Independent	502	52	482	49
Partially supp.	695	114	465	53
Self supp.	680	230	505	104
Total men	624	102	450	49
Total women	550	128	543	57