

Tetanus Morbidity and Mortality in Taiwan

From 1956 to 1983, the incidence of tetanus in Taiwan decreased from 11.0 to 0.052 cases per 100,000 population (Figure 2). The tetanus mortality rate also decreased during this period from 10.0 to 0.024 deaths per 100,000 population. From 1962 to 1983, the neonatal tetanus mortality rate (tetanus deaths in infants under one month of age) declined from 37.0 to 0.27 deaths per 100,000 live births. During this period, the proportion of tetanus deaths due to neonatal tetanus also declined from 68 to 10 percent. Although the incidence of tetanus decreased in all age groups, the largest reduction occurred among infants (Table 1). Since 1978, more than half of all reported tetanus cases occurred in persons over 45 years of age. The incidence of tetanus decreased in all geographic areas, and from 1979 to 1983, only one county (Yulin) had an average rate over 0.5 cases per 100,000 population (Figure 3). During this period, 100 (86%) of the

116 tetanus cases were reported by eight counties with only 34 percent of the total population. The type of injury resulting in tetanus was known for 46 adult cases during this period; 23 (50%) resulted from puncture wounds. The material causing the puncture was known for 17 cases; 8 (47%) resulted from punctures by bamboo sticks.

Reported by Communicable Disease Control Section, Bureau of Disease Control, Department of Health, Executive Yuan.

Editorial note: In most developing countries, the largest proportion of tetanus occurs among neonates. In some countries, neonatal tetanus is responsible for up to 60 percent of all neonatal deaths.¹ Neonatal tetanus mortality is highest in countries where a large

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Figure 2. Tetanus incidence and mortality rates, Taiwan, R.O.C., 1956-1983.



Table 1. Reduction in age-specific incidence of tetanus between the periods 1962-1965 and 1980-1983

Age (years)	Average annual incidence (per 100,000)		% Reduction
	1962-1965	1980-1983	
<1	40.00	0.72	98%
1-14	0.96	0.06	94%
15-44	0.35	0.02	94%
≥45	1.40	0.28	80%