

Thesis Title Factors Affecting Elderly's Morbidity : A
Comparative Study between Municipal and
Non-Municipal Areas in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

For over two decades, Thailand's population has been aging, that is, the number and proportion of the elderly in the population has been rising. The determinants of this age structure change are many and include decreasing rates of fertility and mortality, increasing economic and social development, as well as advances in medical and health care. Despite these however, one major consequence of this trend is the increasing incidence of health problems characteristic of the elderly age group (i.e., 60 years and older). Specifically, four major categories of disease are prominent: 1) infectious diseases, 2) diseases of the circulatory system, 3) diseases of the respiratory system, and 4) diseases of the digestive system.

This study has as its main objective to compare the demographic, socioeconomic and environmental factors affecting elderly morbidity between municipal and non-municipal areas. Secondary data from a survey project on Morbidity and Mortality, conducted in 1985 by the Institute for Population and Social Research and the Faculty of Public Health at Mahidol University,

were analyzed with Chi-square being the major analytical method.

In keeping with these four major diseases categories, study results indicate the following.

1. Regarding infectious diseases, in non-municipal areas family number, latrine use, and drinking and washing water were significantly associated with illness trends. No factor correlated with the latter in the municipal area.

2. For diseases of the circulatory system, economic status, occupation and education affected illness trends in the non-municipal area, while sex was the only correlatable factor in the municipal area.

3. Concerning diseases of the respiratory system, sex and occupation were common factors for both municipal and non-municipal areas, though family number was also associated with the latter group.

4. With respect to diseases of the digestive system, education is only associated factor for the municipal area, while age and economic status correlated for the non-municipal area.

On an overall basis therefore, this study's purpose is to improve programme planning in terms of preventing illness and increasing the health status of the elderly at present and in the future. It is recommended that health education and community primary health care programmes, in general, be strengthened and directed specifically towards this target group and keeping with the factors which correlate well with disease causation. The aim should be towards correcting inappropriate health behaviors.