

DIPHTHERIA

Sixty seven provinces reported a total of 1,918 cases of diphtheria and 119 deaths in 1980 , slightly lower than the 2,009 cases in 1979. Five provinces reported no cases of diphtheria , and 2 of them, Phrae and Phuket,had no reported cases was observed in all provinces except Chiangmai, which reported 178 cases , nearly 6 times the number reported in 1979. This was due to an outbreak among primary school children in hilltribe communities and the general population from July to August 1980.

Of the total cases, 53% occurred in children under 5 years of age, and over 97% occurred in children under age 15, The age specific incidence in the period 1973-1980 showed a decreasing trend in children under 5 years of age but an upward trend in persons over age 10 years. Some of these changing trends may be due to the impact of the expanded programme for Immunization(EPI).

The EPI , which includes administration of the bacillus of Calmette and Guerin vaccine (BCG) , diphtheriapertussis-tetanus vaccine (DPT) and oral polio-vaccine (OPV) , was launched on a limited scale in 1977. Before that time immunization was done according to the decisions of local health officials. More time will be needed to assess the impact of this programme.