

MORTALITY, MORBIDITY AND HEALTH STATISTICS

Mortality, Morbidity
and
Health Statistics

Michael Alderson

M
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Preface

The aim of this book is first to provide a comprehensive guide to the users of mortality statistics and second to list various sources of morbidity statistics, on abortion, cancer registration, congenital malformation notification, hospital in-patients, morbidity treated in general practice, notification of infectious disease, sickness absence and indicators of morbidity from surveys. In addition to the inclusion of chapters on each of these nine topics, the book begins with a consideration of some of the general method issues, and ends with a consideration of the relative role of routine versus *ad hoc* collection of data (especially via *ad hoc* surveys). Each topic-chapter contains material on specific method issues relevant to the particular topic; emphasis is placed on the source of the basic data, the validity of the material, the statistical techniques most appropriate for handling the material, ways of presenting the statistics, the publications of international material and the various uses to which the results may be put. For each main category of use, one or more examples are given, usually accompanied by tables or figures of actual data. These examples have been chosen primarily to provide clear examples of the various uses, but they also attempt to cover a wide range of diseases and include material from various countries. It was not possible to ensure complete coverage of all conditions and all countries, as the selection had to be governed by what was available, and it also needed to be suitable to illustrate the method aspects.

The book should be of value to (1) those responsible for handling routine mortality and morbidity statistics in regional and national offices of vital statistics or health statistics and (2) users of routine data, such as epidemiologists, other medical staff, statisticians, and those involved in health-care management.

It must be emphasised that the book does not include material on (1) staffing, (2) facilities (hospitals, beds, clinics, major equipment inventories) or (3) costs of health care. These are very different sets of statistics, generally of interest to a different group from those concerned with studying mortality or morbidity. The sources, problems of use, types of application and statistical techniques required are all different from those covered in this book. They were therefore considered inappropriate for inclusion.

In a much more limited, very different and now somewhat dated fashion, some of the material included here appeared in two earlier works—*Routine Central Government Health Statistics* (Alderson, 1974) and *Health Surveys and*

Related Studies (Alderson and Dowie, 1979). I am most grateful to Professor Derek Maunder, who invited me to provide these contributions to the series that he was editing on UK Statistical Sources. As indicated in the previous paragraph, I have steered clear of the area that was the particular field of my collaborator in the second work, Mrs Robin Dowie. In various capacities I have been involved in work relevant to the topics of this book since 1962. I am most grateful to the late Professor Robert Wofinden and Dr Wynne Griffith, who started me on this path, and the many colleagues who have helped me along the way since then. It would be invidious to identify any other individual from the many who have advised me over the past 25 years.

This book is dedicated to my wife, who has struggled on while I finished my eighth such work in what should have been our spare time together.

Southampton, 1988

M.R.A.

Publisher's announcement

It is with regret that we record the sudden death of Dr Alderson as this book was going to press. We offer our condolences to his family.