

Illnesses of Migrant Farm Workers: A Study of Medical Records from Migrant Health Clinics in Michigan

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ABSTRACT

This report presents data from the medical records of patients who were migrant farmworkers or their family members, and who were last seen at migrant clinics in Michigan in the late 1980s. This project analyzed data from 154 patients who were at least five years of age. Little is known about migrant worker health, particularly in the Midwest. In Michigan, migrant farmworkers tend to be invisible in state statistics, agency budgets, and even U.S. Census data. Since the U.S. Census is conducted on April 1st, it misses nearly all of Michigan's migrant workers who are still out of the state at that point in the agriculture cycle. Their low income, poor living conditions, and lack of health insurance would be expected to correlate with their poor health. On the other hand, they must be in good enough health to carry out heavy physical labor. The study found that the three most commonly treated problems were: 1) respiratory tract infections (29%), 2) digestive system problems (25%), and 3) musculoskeletal disorders (20%). The main referrals were dental (26%), radiological (26%), and vision-related (17%).