

Diseases rampant in the Kut district during the royal era 1921-1958 (historical study)

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Abstract The study dealt with the suffering of the people in Kut District as a result of the outbreak of many diseases and epidemics during the research period. Many factors are behind the spread of these diseases and epidemics, including the primitive health system that relied on a few health institutions, in addition to the lack of medical and health personnel and the scarcity of medical specialties. Those factors and conditions accompanied the health work. The district's health institutions performed their role using the available means; this was done through the preventive measures taken by these institutions, including vaccination campaigns, counselling, awareness raising and alerting to the dangers of diseases, which helped in one way or another to stop or limit some diseases in the Kut district.

Keywords: leprosy, cholera, eye diseases, children's diseases.

Introduction:

Al-Kut district has studied all its political, economic, social and administrative conditions, and these studies did not pay attention to health conditions, as it is not hidden from everyone that these conditions are of great and extreme importance; Because it is directly and closely related to people's lives and their various activities, so we chose the topic of research (diseases rampant in the Kut district 1921 - 1958) with the aim of shedding light on it, and the accompanying outbreak of many diseases and epidemics as a result of the deterioration and weakness in the health services provided and the attempts made to improve and develop them by the authorities Health in the successive Iraqi governments that were formed during the period of the monarchy.

Diseases rampant in Kut district:

Many epidemics and diseases invaded Iraq in different ways, either through trade or through warring armies; it was not easy to know the origins of these diseases without effort, as historians found it difficult to record the origin of these epidemics in Iraq.

Especially in the chaos of descriptive notation that was filled with many exaggerations and anecdotes (1).

Many factors combined greatly affected public health and the spread and endemicity of diseases in Iraq; As the location of Iraq near the tropics, which is the scene of endemic diseases, In addition to the natural factors and weather fluctuations such as floods that left destruction, swamps and stagnant water that cause health disasters, which are a direct factor for the spread of endemic diseases, and the variation in temperature (2)

Other factors also contributed to the spread of diseases and epidemics in Iraq in general and Kut, in particular, are the political, economic and social fluctuations that the country experienced during the period of the monarchy (1921 - 1958), in addition to the lack of health and treatment institutions (hospitals and clinics), and the great shortage of medical personnel and health, especially doctors, is added to the weakness of financial allocations to implement the plans that were prepared by the health administration and which were addressed in the second chapter, as

many diseases and epidemics spread in the Kut district throughout the period of the monarchy, as the injuries to these diseases varied and can be divided as follows:

First: leprosy:

It is one of the chronic transitional diseases and is characterized by rashes and small tumours affecting the skin, affecting the surrounding nerves, followed by loss of sensation, general weakness of muscles, paralysis and decay of the skin, muscle and bone. The main cause of this disease is leprosy bacilli (Mycobacterium), The person is a reservoir for the disease, while the source of infection is the secretions from the inflammatory areas of the infected person, and the method of transmission of the disease is through the skin or the mucous membrane of the upper respiratory tracts (3).

As for the clinical manifestations and the incubation period of the disease, it ranges from two to more than ten years, with an average of three years, during which skin and neurological symptoms appear, especially the bright red spots on the skin.(4)

Leprosy is a serious and highly contagious disease, so the health authorities in Iraq established a leprosy hospital or (leprosy colony) in the Al-Amarah district. Iraq, as lepers are transferred from all Iraqi brigades to it, and the building of that colony was very old, and also contained tents and sheds to house lepers when needed (5).

As for the treatment given to lepers, it was (Sulfanzone blues) and pills that contain tonics, as well as medicines that contain percentages of iron compounds (6).

During the three years (1923, 1924, 1925), five cases of leprosy occurred in the various districts and districts of Kut District (7), while one case occurred in April 1926 in the district with the aforementioned disease (8) as shows in the table (1).

Table (1) shows the number of cases recorded with the disease Leprosy in the Kut Brigade for the years (1934-1955) (9):

Year	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Number											—
Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Number	—		—	—	—	—	—		—		

It is clear to us from the above table that the recorded cases of leprosy were few and close, and that the Kut district was free of injuries in some years, and the reason for this is that the health authorities in the district were strict in their measures to limit the spread of this dangerous disease.

Cholera (10):

Cholera is an acute communicable disease, known for its rapid transmission and spread of its germs.(11)As for its symptoms, they are severe vomiting, pain-free diarrhoea, and stools similar to rice water, dehydration, muscle spasms, degeneration of strength, and urinary retention (12) .The cause of the disease is a germ called (Vibro cholera), and it is in the form of an arched excretory that lives and multiplies with humidity and normal temperatures and dies in high heat and drought(13).

Iraq witnessed the spread of cholera in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and that was in the summer in the years (1923, 1927, 1931). The victims of the disease each time are more than a thousand people (14).

The cases recorded by the official health authorities with cholera disease in the Kut district for the year 1923 amounted to 62 cases, while the cases recorded for the year 1927 in the district with this disease amounted to (66) cases (15).

An outbreak of cholera disease in Kut District, specifically in Mehairha district, on November 25 and 26, 1931. The Kut District Health Department took the necessary measures to limit its spread. The District Health Director went to the mentioned district to see the situation of the epidemic himself. By carrying out examinations and investigations for the disease by taking faeces samples of suspects and examining them, quarantining infected persons and those in contact with them in their homes, and closing the villages where the infection appeared by not entering or leaving them, in addition to vaccination operations (16) that took place widely in most of the affected districts and regions The disease was free of disease, and the epidemic lasted for six days, in which 31 people were infected, 15 of whom died and the rest were treated, then the spread of the disease stopped in the aforementioned area through the severe measures and procedures followed by the district health department and the administrative authority (17) as shows in the table (2)

Table (2) shows the number of vaccinations against cholera in the Kut District for the year 1931 (18):

Region	Kut District	District alhy	Essaouira District	Badra District	Nu maniyah district	Azi ziyah district
Number of pollinators	1 2614	65 07	47 00	1 358	12 700	26 45

As a result of the health measures and measures taken by the health authorities in Iraq in general and the Kut Brigade in particular, no infection appeared after 1931 until the end of the monarchy in Iraq.

Eye disease

Eye diseases are one of the most prevalent diseases in Iraq, and these diseases are among the most important and serious health problems that most of Iraq's brigades have suffered from, as its spread exceeded malaria in the country, and an eye specialist stated in 1926 that approximately (65%) of the population Iraq suffers from various eye diseases (19).

The disease (trachoma)(20) It is one of the infectious diseases that were common and widespread in Iraq, as it was easy for everyone to easily see its symptoms among the infected (21). Also, this disease is a communicable, chronic and transmissible disease that affects the eye, characterized by acute or gradual inflammation in its beginning and then accompanied by the appearance of blood vessels Capillary in the cornea, fibrosis and distortion in the eyelids, inability and weakness in vision, and the patient may become blind in some cases. The main cause of this disease is the trachoma virus, and the infection is usually with various eye diseases from the infected person to the healthy person through contact, and flies and dust also contribute to the transmission of Infection through infected person's purulent and mucous secretions and tears (22).

The spread of trachoma disease in Iraq was large; Because of the large number of dirt and bad habits such as placing hands in the eyes and using common tissues and other habits. Trachoma disease spreads most of the time in young children; Because of their frequent playing with dirt and their mixing with those infected with trachoma, the high incidence of trachoma in schools has alerted the Ministry of Education to take the necessary measures to limit its spread in schools (23).

It spread health awareness through lectures that doctors gave to students to explain to them the dangers of this disease, ways to treat it, and attention to hygiene (24).

In the mid-thirties of the last century, the Ministry of Education opened the first clinic to treat communicable diseases in general and trachoma in particular, and the health of knowledge carried out periodic checks for primary and secondary schools once a year and three times a year for kindergartens (25).

The Directorate of Public Health prepared monthly and annual reports of diseases and found that trachoma disease had increased significantly, which worsened the situation because until 1955, there were only 16 doctors specialized in eye diseases in Iraq, and this number is not commensurate with the increasing number of eye diseases in Iraq. country (26) as shows in the table (3).

Table. (3) shows the number of recorded cases of trachoma in the Kut District for the years (1929 - 1958) (27):

Year	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Number	4618	5323	4672	5386	4415	6904	12986	16912
Year	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Number	10581	11224	12939	18668	23000	20131	17500	18846
Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952
Number	1402	18936	20427	15894	16833	9383	13170	8913
Year	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958		
Number	9149	20700	14005	5595	13034	10164		

It is clear to us from the above table that the number of cases of trachoma in the Kut district was fluctuating. The number of cases in 1929 was (4618), then the number rose dramatically to reach (16,912) cases, and the year 1941 was the highest year in terms of the number of injuries, as It reached (23,000) injuries, then the injuries decreased again to reach (9383) injuries in 1950, and the state of fluctuation in injuries remained between high and low until 1958, reaching (10,164) injuries.

One of the eye diseases that spread in the Kut district is purulent ophthalmia. Which is one of the serious eye diseases that is caused by a microbe that humans get infected with in most seasons of the year, and the main reason for transmitting the infection is flies, shaking hands with those infected with it, and using towels and tissues contaminated with the patient's secretions (28), as the disease passes through three stages, in the first stage the patient develops swelling of the eyelids And redness of the eyes and a lot of tears. As for the second stage, the swelling of the eyelids increases to the point where it becomes difficult to see due to the large number of pus secretions, while the patient suffers in the third stage of the disease with complications in which ulcers increase in the cornea, which results in a cloud in the eye and darkness that may end with loss of vision (29).

For example, the number of infections in Iraq with purulent conjunctivitis reported in Iraqi health institutions during the year 1951 was (434,20), i.e. at a rate of (5,420) injuries per hundred thousand of the population, compared to in 1952 (523,27) injuries, i.e. an average of (7,563) per one hundred thousand population (30) as shows in the table (4).

Table (4) shows the number of cases of purulent conjunctivitis recorded in Kut District for the years (1934-1955) (31):

Year	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Number	3	5	8	7	6	04	36	04	76	11	461
Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Number	44	44	23	076	059	202	253	235	159		1

It is clear to us from the above table that the number of cases of purulent conjunctivitis in the Kut district fluctuated between increase and decrease according to the years. Subsequent years, the number of injuries in 1944 reached (1461), and the number of injuries began to rise until it reached its peak in 1953, reaching (3159) injuries, after which the injuries decreased very significantly until it reached in 1954 to one injury, and in 1955 (21) injury.

Children's diseases:

The problem of children's diseases is one of the major health and social problems in Iraq, and because of the seriousness of this problem, the Health Directorate, since its inception, has taken care of motherhood and childhood care, and the Directorate of Health has taken important steps in this direction through the establishment of the Child Protection Association, the purpose of which was to care for children and protect them from diseases that affect them. It was prevalent at that time, and despite the efforts made by the Health Directorate and its formations in the field of childhood and maternity care, it was suffering from a significant shortage of specialized medical and health cadres and a lack of financial allocations (32).

The diseases of children were diverse and numerous. Among those diseases were tuberculosis, smallpox, diphtheria, pneumonia and dysentery, in addition to all kinds of febrile diseases, measles, mumps, whooping cough and tetanus. They were called children's diseases; Because a high percentage of those affected are children (33), The spread of these diseases and the weak resistance of children to them led to an increase in the mortality rate of children in Iraq, in addition to the lack of health awareness among mothers and their lack of knowledge of the rules of health education, as well as the lack of nutrition and its lack of diversity (34). Among the most important diseases of children in the Kut district:

First: Poliomyelitis

It is an acute viral disease characterized by high temperatures with muscle paralysis (35), and characterized by severe fever, general weakness, headache, and stiffness in the neck and back, and the infection is from the age of (1-16) years (36), and the incubation period of the disease extends from (5-35) days, but the general average is ten days, and there are two types of poliomyelitis, the first type without paralysis and the second type with paralysis (37). The cases of this disease in Iraq in 1954 amounted to (84) injuries, while the injuries in 1955 amounted to (112) injuries.

Secondly: Measles

It is one of the acute and endemic infectious diseases in Iraq that affects children, caused by a virus that is transmitted through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and respiratory tracts (38),

Measles does not usually affect babies before the fourth month; Because the child has acquired immunity from his mother, which begins to gradually decline, as most infections occur between the sixth month and the fifth year of the child's life. Symptoms of the disease are cold, cough, red eyes and a sharp rise in temperature, accompanied by congestion in the pharynx, then a rash appears after that (39) Measles is also one of the diseases that were very common among Iraqi

children during the period of the monarchy, as it was estimated that the incidence of it was (95%) to those under the age of fifteen (40).

Third :Tetanus

It is a contagious disease characterized by stiffness in the muscles of the brain and neck, and sometimes muscle spasms occur in the rest of the body of the injured, and it is caused by a bacterium called (tetanus sticks) and this bacterium is found in cultivated soil and street dust and in horse droppings and stables. and the period of his incubation is between (2-20) days and maybe more (41), Newborns are usually infected as a result of the wrong practices used by folk midwives by cutting the navel, which causes contamination with the tetanus germ, and then symptoms appear on the newborns shortly after birth, and tetanus infection has led to thousands of deaths of children annually in Iraq In the royal era (42).

Fourth: Whooping cough

It is an acute infectious disease that usually affects children and has a long duration ranging between (30-40) days, and it is caused by whooping cough sticks. General weakness in the body and may generate permanent damage to the lungs, and the disease increases in the spring and usually occurs in the form of an epidemic (43).

The infection of the disease is transmitted from a sick child to a healthy child in several ways, either through secretions resulting from bouts of coughing, sneezing and spitting, or through contact with the patient and his other oral and nasal secretions, whether by hand or by touching his contaminated tools, especially tissues and their use by healthy children, or the infection is transmitted Through overcrowding, poor ventilation in homes, and lack of attention to health prevention (44).

The disease was rampant in most schools in Iraq, which prompted the Student Health Directorate to carry out extensive vaccinations against the disease for ages under the age of seven in all Iraqi schools(45).

Fifthly: Corynebacterium diphtheria

It is a contagious disease that usually affects children under the age of thirteen years of age, and this disease is prevalent at times when the air becomes more humid and cold (46), and the cause of this disease is diphtheria sticks, and this germ is called (Klebs-loffler bacillus), the source of infection is the secretions of the mucous surfaces of the nose and pharynx and from other inflammatory areas. The disease is transmitted through contact with the patient or with his contaminated tools, and the incubation period is between (2-5) days or longer (47).

Diphtheria was widespread and widespread among children in Iraq, especially among school students.If we had observed the course of the disease between the years (1946-1955), we would have found that the number of cases of it increased year after year. This increase was not due to the spread of the disease, but rather that increase was caused by the people's review of health institutions to take treatment and their acceptance of the preventive measures that were carried out by those institutions, and the people were deliberately hiding infected patients for fear of isolation and health institutions vaccinating those in contact with infected patients, but The people started turning to the health institutions to take the treatment and the vaccine, especially after they saw the great benefits from it (48).

Sixth: Mumps

It is an acute contagious disease that affects children and is characterized by inflammation of the salivary glands, especially the parotid ones. This disease is one of the diseases that spread in most countries of the world and comes in the form of a general epidemic (49).

The disease spreads in the winter and early spring, and is more common among children and juveniles, especially before the age of fifteen, but it may sometimes occur in adults as well. Direct contact between the patient and the other person, and the virus enters through the respiratory system or through the mouth, and the incubation period ranges between (17-21) days (50).

It is considered one of the endemic diseases in Iraq and hardly one of the children who pass primary school survives from it, especially in the crowded popular areas, and its infection gradually decreases in the secondary and university levels, but it appears in adults, especially among the rural population during the stage of military training, and military gatherings In the army barracks, especially during the winter season (51).

Seventh: Diarrhea of children

It is one of the communicable diseases characterized by diarrhoea that affects children from the first year to the fifth year, as it is more severe for children in the first year. Al-Basili and others, and infection in this disease occur through filth, crowding, pollution and uncleanliness of pots and bowls, as well as flies and dust, which also transmit the infection, and cause high temperatures, severe diarrhoea and vomiting accompanied by colic (52). Wasting and diarrhoea are the two most deadly diseases for children, as Dirt, lack of hygiene, care and malnutrition were a major cause for them (53) as shown in the table (5).

Table No. (5) Shows the number of recorded cases of child diseases in the Kut District for the years (1934-1955) (54).

Year	Measles	Tetanus	Corynebacterium diphtheria	mu mps	Whooping cough
1934	13	9	4	54	63
1935	15	11	2	83	42
1936	16	7	—	199	91
1937	30	12	2	103	29
1938	89	8	—	304	96
1939	11	5	9	52	12
1940	128	7	5	73	66
1941	87	13	5	112	96
1942	52	9	6	174	235
1943	50	10	6	149	220
1944	40	17	1	320	15
1945	43	12	2	245	7
1946	48	9	—	197	36
1947	26	8	1	368	147

1 948	55	11	2	40 5	68
1 949	63	12	5	45 6	77
1 950	41	8	10	39 0	93
1 951	20	15	37	19 7	136
1 952	52	19	48	19 2	61
1 953	67	29	43	84 5	11
1 954	12 1	44	63	62 2	65
1 955	13 1	—	5	42 6	42

It is clear to us from the above table that the prevalence of childhood diseases in the Kut district varies from year to year in 1934, there were 13 injuries. Then the number of injuries increased in 1940 to (128), and then returned to decline in 1951 to (20) injuries. And it rose again in 1955 to (131) cases. As for tetanus and diphtheria, the injuries were low. Also, cases of mumps fluctuated, after the number of cases reached 54 in 1934, the number rose to reach (304) cases in 1938. Then the number of injuries decreased in 1940, reaching (73) injuries, after which the escalation of injuries returned until the number reached (405) injuries in 1948. In addition, the number of injuries remained between declining and rising until 1955, when it reached (426) injuries.

Conclusions:

The study was able to put a clear picture of the health conditions in the Kut district during the royal era. There were many factors that contributed to the spread of many diseases, foremost of which were ignorance, backwardness, lack of health education and poverty, while the health authorities in the district tried, even with a narrow scope, to prevent the spread and spread of diseases. Among the people, it has taken measures and measures that would limit the spread of diseases, the most important of which are vaccination campaigns, health awareness and health education about diseases and their consequences, but at the same time, despite these measures, it was not able to stop the spread of many diseases; For the lack of specialized medical and health personnel in the district.

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