"It Depends on Where You Look": The Unusual Presentation of Scurvy and Smallpox Among Klondike Gold Rushers as Revealed Through Qualitative Data Sources

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Abstract

Health in the context of frontier boomtown communities represents an underdeveloped topic of research both within the social sciences and beyond. Studies of such historic communities offer insight into the human condition in past populations. They provide valuable observations with far-reaching modern-day applications, as many of the issues faced by the Klondike Gold Rushers are similarly experienced by those residing in single-industry and resource communities experiencing fast change in the remote wilderness. These communities present a unique biosocial context for the experience of disease and disorders, as is evident in the case of both scurvy and smallpox when they erupted in the Klondike gold fields. Yet, for various reasons, these diseases remained invisible when quantitative data sources only were used. The important implications that these sicknesses held for the health status of the gold rushers would thus have been undetected had analysis focused solely upon the customary morbidity and mortality data sources, resulting in a distorted view of the human condition in the context of this celebrated event in Canadian history. Only when qualitative materials are also explored does the full picture of the health in this historic population come into focus, while also revealing much more about life in this particular time and place than simply what illnesses the Klondikers suffered and died from.

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Scurvy definition is - a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C and characterized by spongy gums, loosening of the teeth, and a bleeding into the skin and mucous membranes. How to use scurvy in a sentence. Synonym Discussion of scurvy. Examples of scurvy in a sentence. Adjective. after winning the lottery, she was beset by a whole scurvy swarm of con artists, ne’er-do-wells, and hangers-on.