

in the United States in 1926 was 74.9 per 100,000 population. Medical authorities believed then that people with arrested tuberculosis would never have the strength to meet the demands of their previous employment. The employability of persons who had had tuberculosis was further curtailed by the popular attitude that since the disease was contagious, those suffering from it should be avoided.

The grim expectations of 1926 have not been realized. Experience has demonstrated that most World War I veterans receiving the minimum rate of compensation for arrested tuberculosis had no recurrence of the disease. Furthermore, the causes of death for this group closely resembled those of the general population. At present, modern methods of medical treatment achieve rapid and stable arrest of tuberculosis. These methods have accelerated the decline in the occurrence of the disease and have lowered the death rate from tuberculosis to a point of relative insignificance. In 1965, the death rate from tuberculosis in the United States was 3.8 per 100,000 population. By now, the general public has stopped considering those who have had tuberculosis as outcasts.

Ordinarily, there is no loss of employability in cases of arrested tuberculosis. Veterans who have received modern treatment for the disease are generally able to return to their homes with assurance of normal industrial acceptance and full-time employment. Thus, the compensation these veterans receive (in the form of a statutory award) does not reflect average economic impairment, as compensation is intended to do. Because of this, the compensation received by veterans with arrested tuberculosis discriminates against all other veterans.

The Commission feels that disability ratings for all veterans should be related to demonstrable physical impairment. We therefore recommend that veterans with tuberculosis should be assigned a 100-per cent disability rating during the period of active disease and for two years thereafter, while convalescence takes place. After this two-year period, disability compensation should reflect actual economic impairment. If some degree of disability remains, the rating schedule provides ample authority and criteria for evaluating and compensating for such residual disability. To avoid hardship, however, we feel that veterans now receiving compensation under the present law should continue to receive this payment.