

Teething Deaths in the Nashville City Cemetery

A.J. Grande DA9

Teething is one of the top 10 causes of death associated with burials in the cemetery, but they are all concentrated in the earlier years in the records.

Why is Teething a cause of death and why did it drop off in the 1880s and beyond?

Process

- Data Formatting
- Data Observations
- Research
- Conclusions



Data Formatting

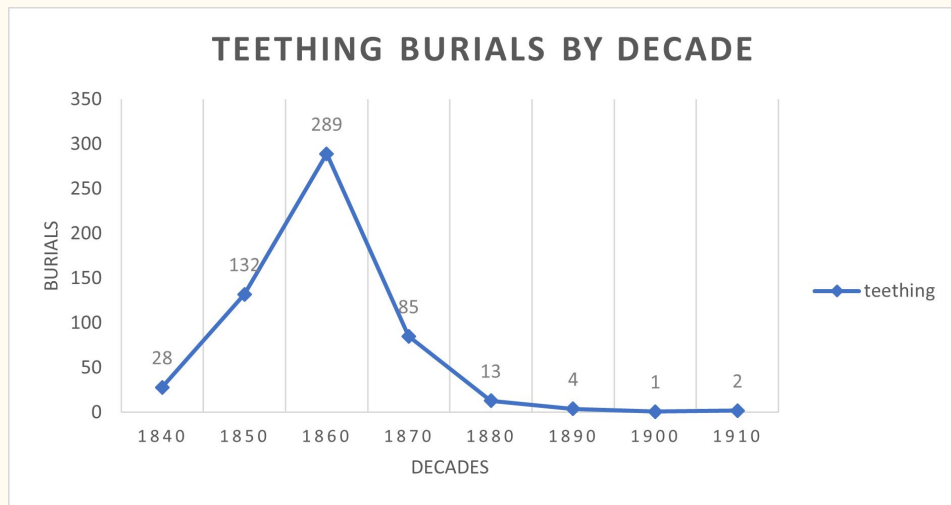
Using the publicly accessible data for burials at the Nashville City Cemetery, I was able to do the following:

- Isolate burials with “teething” as the primary cause of death
 - This included finding possible misspellings to get a more accurate number
- Count the burials per year with that cause of death
- Group the burials by decade to give us better understanding of high-level trends

| Teething deaths by Decade | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | Grand Total |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Teething | 28 | 132 | 289 | 85 | 13 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 554 |

Data Observations

- The amount of burials related to teething basically disappeared as the years progress
- There is a huge spike in burials related in the 1860's
- The 1840's data does is drastically lower than following decades
 - The earliest records in the data was 1846, so this sample size was much smaller



Research

- **Teething at this time in the 1800's was widely misunderstood**
 - Fever, rash, and diarrhoea were all believed to be symptoms at the time
 - Because of this, it is safe to assume that deaths could have been wrongly attributed to teething because of this misunderstanding
- **The Civil War was fought in the 1860's as well**
 - The increase in burials for this decade reflects the conflict
 - More soldiers died of disease than in battle in the Civil War
 - There were soldiers that went home to try and recover, possibly exposing their whole families to these diseases
- **Germ Theory became more accepted**
 - This theory became more widely accepted later in the 1800's and into the 1900's
 - It gave doctors a better understanding of the cause of disease

Conclusions

Based on the data provided by the Nashville City Cemetery, it probably safe to conclude:

- It is very possible that a large amount of deaths “caused” by Teething were actually a result of an underlying disease
 - This is because of a lack of understanding and education about the Germ Theory and how it lead to contracting illness
- The increase in deaths in the 1860’s was linked to the increased disease exposure to families of soldiers who fought in the war
- Death’s caused by Teething dramatically dropped as a result of a better understanding of the germ theory and deaths being categorized more accurately.

Sources

- Fever associated with teething
 - National Library of Medicine
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1793425/?page=2>
- Teething
 - University of Leeds
 - <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/2172>
- Disease and Medical Care
 - U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center
 - https://ahec.armywarcollege.edu/exhibits/CivilWarImagery/cheney_disease.cfm#:~:text=More%20soldiers%20died%20of%20disease,whooping%20cough%2C%20and%20small%20pox.
- Germ Theory
 - Harvard Library
 - <https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/contagion/feature/germ-theory>