

Environmental factors in Tiny Tim's near fatal illness

March 16 2012

Le Bonheur Professor Russell Chesney, M.D. believes he knows what was ailing Tiny Tim, the iconic character from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." Based on detailed descriptions of both the symptoms and living conditions of 18th century London, Dr. Chesney hypothesizes that Tiny Tim suffered from a combination of rickets and tuberculosis (TB). His findings were published in the March 5 edition of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

Dr. Chesney noted during the time the novel was written, 60 percent of children in London had rickets and nearly 50 percent displayed signs of TB. He says this is due to crowded living conditions, poor diets, filth and low exposure to sunlight. The coal-burning city of London in addition to particles from a Indonesian volcanic eruption contributed to blackened skies for many years.

Both rickets and TB can be improved and indeed cured through increased exposure to Vitamin D, which can be obtained through exposure to sunlight and a [balanced diet](#).

As the Ghost of Christmas Present showed Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim's condition would be fatal without a different course for the boy. According to Dr. Chesney's research, Scrooge could have ensured an improved diet, sunshine exposure and [cod liver oil](#) (a common supplement of the day high in Vitamin D) through improved generosity to Bob Cratchit and his family.

Provided by Le Bonheur Children's Hospital

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