Spurious human infections with *Schistosoma bovis*

Sir—Genuine human infections with *Schistosoma bovis* must be considered rare, though they undoubtedly do occur (RAPER, 1951). In our present studies in the Gezira Irrigated Area of the Sudan routine diagnosis by a modified Kato thick smear technique suggests that less than 1% of persons examined have *S. bovis* eggs in their stools. Numbers of eggs are never more than 40 per gramme of stool, and are generally much less.

McMAHON (1969), considered that most cases are probably spurious and result from eating the infected intestines of cattle or sheep. Recently, when using my own stool as a negative control in a series of experiments, I was surprised to find that I was passing 80 *S. bovis* eggs per gramme of stool. No eggs were found, however, in the subsequent examinations on the days following the detection, and I experienced none of the symptoms described by RAPER (1951). A hatching test on the original stool was negative, and with my being unable to recall any instance in the months previous where I might have been exposed to infection with cercariae, I can only conclude that I obtained the eggs through eating liver, which I had done about two days previously.

Infection with *S. bovis* in cattle in the Gezira is very common, and exposure of the local populace to cercariae of this species undoubtedly occurs. The above finding, together with the very low prevalence of human stools containing *S. bovis* eggs, suggests that McMahon's contention is true.

I am, etc.,

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17th September, 1975

References


Absence of haemosiderosis in a Gambian (adult) population

Sir—Nearly fifty years ago, STRACHAN (quoted in EDINGTON and GILLES, 1969) reported that heavy deposits of iron are frequently found in the tissues of the Bantu population in Southern Africa. “Bantu siderosis” was said to be absent in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (TROWELL, 1960), though HUTT (1971) reported an excess of stainable iron in the liver of Ugandan Africans “occasionally”. A small amount of siderosis has been reported from Dakar (CAMAIN, 1957); the situation in The Gambia was unknown.

During investigations into primary liver cell carcinoma in The Gambia between October 1971 and March 1973, liver biopsies were obtained from 41 adult patients suffering from various liver disorders. Sections from these biopsies have been stained for iron by the acid-ferrocyanide method. The biopsies stained with H and E, showed hepatoma (16), cirrhosis (10), normal liver (6), and others (6). Stainable iron was present, in very small quantities only, in six of the hepatic sections and two cirrhotic patients.

Siderosis, therefore, was not seen in this investigation in The Gambia.

I am, etc.,

G. H. Ree

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References


Apparent absence of a sex attractant in adult *Triatoma infestans* (Klug), vector of Chagas’ disease

Sir—Pheromones are of increasing interest in biological studies bearing on control measures, particularly pheromones which induce attraction between the sexes. BALDWIN et al (1971) reported from olfactometer studies that groups of mixed male and female *Rhodnius prolixus* produced a pheromone which attracted males of this species, concluding that the pheromone was emitted by mating pairs. We confirmed this finding for *R. prolixus* but, as described below, have no evidence for a similar pheromone in *Triatoma infestans*, another important South American vector of Chagas’ disease.

In one type of experiment, 30 adult male *T. infestans* were released in an arena 90 cm x 60 cm x 15 cm, which included on its floor a gauze-covered petri dish, 10 cm in diameter, containing five male and five virgin females, all recently fed on rabbit, and another similar gauze-covered petri dish without bugs as a control. The petri dishes were placed 20 cm from one end of the arena and 30 cm apart. The movements of the released males were recorded by flash photography every five minutes for 18 consecutive hours overnight, from 16.00-10.00 hours, which includes the normal period of nocturnal activity of the bugs. At the end of an experiment, the target females in the petri dish were separated from the males and their eggs collected when laid; the fertility of these eggs showed that mating had occurred in the petri dish during the experiment. Several experiments were made in which the males allowed to move freely in the arena were either unfed, or fed one, 24, 48 or 72 hours before being released.