



Committee: World Health Organization (WHO)

Topic B: Which measures should be taken to fight Dracunculiasis, disease caused by the water flea (Cyclops), in Africa?

Committee Description:

In the 21st century, health is a shared responsibility, involving equitable access to essential care and collective defense against transnational threats. WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. Its goal is to improve equity in health, reduce health risks, promote healthy lifestyles and settings, and respond to the underlying determinants of health.

Description of the topic:

Dracunculiasis, also known as Guinea Worm disease, is a disease caused by the water flea (Cyclops). This disease is transmitted exclusively by drinking contaminated water. The flea runs through the people's body that drank the polluted water, and begins by causing a severe pain in the joints. When the parasite has been developed, the intense pain transforms into a wound which comes in company of fever and nausea.

History of the topic:

Africa ranks as one of the most affected continents by this disease and also Dracunculiasis has been rated as the more neglected disease case. Dracunculiasis or Guinea Worm disease is not deadly but the affected people falls into a condition of disability till the worm forms completely. Up until now they have not found a drug, which would cure or prevent this disease. Dracunculiasis is the first parasitic disease in history set for eradication through behavioral change, without the use of vaccines or a cure.

Since 1989 the frequency rate in which Dracunculiasis was appearing in the Africa has been decreasing. By 2007 it was found that this disease has decreased from 883,640 cases in 25,789 villages to 3 700 cases in 251 endemic villages, also the number of endemic countries has decreased from sixteen to just five.

World Health Organization plans to eradicate or finish this disease by 2015; the countries which are affected mostly with the guinea worm disease are: South Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, and Mali especially on rural zones where the drinkable water is inaccessible.

Study Cases:

The affected countries of the African continent who have cases of the Guinea Worm disease are Chad, South Sudan, Mali and Ethiopia. During 2011 the area of South Sudan reported 1,028 cases of Dracunculiasis; Mali reported 12 indigenous cases; Ethiopia reported 8 cases while in Chad reported 21 cases.

Current Situation:

Although rarely fatal, Dracunculiasis continues to be a major public health problem causing dreadful suffering and disability among many rural communities in Africa dependent upon unprotected water sources for drinking and farming. It was until recently ranked among the most neglected diseases of mankind. No drugs are currently available to prevent or heal this parasitic disease. However, it is easy to combat and should no longer be prevalent, because of the easy and unambiguous diagnosis, and immobile transmission agent. The social impact of guinea worm disease is mainly attributable to the temporary disability suffered by the patient. Two longitudinal studies in Nigeria found that 58 to 76% of patients were unable to leave their beds for approximately a month during and after emergence of the worm. Children also suffer in other ways from guinea worm disease in their families. Children miss school when they have guinea worm (in rural Africa, school is usually a long walk away) and also when they have to substitute for their ill parents in doing agricultural work and other household tasks. As a result, school attendance suffers during the peak season, and schools in areas of endemicity often have to close for 1 month in each year as a result.

From 1989 to 2007, the annual incidence of Dracunculiasis in the African Region decreased from 883,640 cases in 25,789 villages to 3 700 cases in 251 endemic villages. As of the end of 2008, 28 countries have been certified free of Dracunculiasis local transmission and 8 countries are at pre-certification stage. The number of endemic countries has decreased from sixteen to just five. The main thrust of the eradication strategy is improved surveillance of cases, backed-up by the promotion of activities and practices to interrupt transmission of the disease. The target date for Guinea Worm Eradication was the year 2005.

Point of View:

The affected countries of the African continent who have cases of the Guinea Worm disease are Chad, South Sudan, Mali and Ethiopia. During 2011 the area of South Sudan reported 1,028 cases of Dracunculiasis; Mali reported 12 indigenous cases; Ethiopia reported 8 cases while in Chad reported 21 cases.

Conclusions:

Dracunculiasis is a disease transmitted by Cyclops, water flies, they cause severe pain. The countries who aren't accessible to drinking water, or that doesn't have a hygienic habit of the water usually are more likely to ingest this type of disease.

Reference:

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