RESEARCH

During the Nigerian National Conference on Dracunculiasis in March 1985, two observers noted, independently of each other, that one or more villages in endemic areas remained relatively free of dracunculiasis, in association with the presence of considerable numbers of tadpoles and/or frogs in the ponds used as their sources of drinking water. Guineaworm Wrap-Up has since learned that in North America, frogs (Rana pipiens) have been implicated in serving as paratenic hosts of Dracunculus insignis (see Crichton, V.F.J. etal, 1977. Observations on the seasonal prevalence, pathology, and transmission of Dracunculus insignis in the Raccoon in Ontario. Journal of Wildlife Diseases, 13:273-280). It appears that frogs and tadpoles ingest infected copepods; the larvae remain viable in the frogs for extended periods; raccoons eat the frogs, whereupon the larvae resume their development to adult guinea worms in the raccoons. Could it be that frogs and tadpoles are potential allies in our struggle against copepod vectors of D. medinensis?

There is still much to be done in the control of dracunculiasis. High priority research areas include investigation of: the efficacy of diethylcarbamazine or ivermectin as prophylactic or therapeutic treatments for immature or mature Dracunculus parasites; the agricultural impact of dracunculiasis (agricultural output of the same villages before and after control of guinea worm, or a comparison of otherwise comparable affected and unaffected villages); water contact studies to document what specific groups of infected persons contaminate village water sources, etc.; investigations of serological methods for diagnosing prepatent cases of dracunculiasis; comparison of the efficacy of different surveillance techniques. (A potential source of funding for latter surveillance studies is the Grants in Rapid Epidemiologic Assessment for Health Planning and Decision Making. For further information on these grants, interested readers should write Dr. Michael P. Greene, Associate Director, Board on Science and Technology for International Development, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20418 U.S.A.).

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Anonymous, 1985. Large turnout for Nigeria's first national conference on guinea-worm control. Africa Health, April/May, p. 7.

Ballance, R.C. and Gunn, R.A., 1984. Drinking-water and sanitation projects: criteria for resource allocation. WHO Chronicle 38:243-248.

Brieger, W.R. etal, 1985. Primary schools: making the teaching relevant to local health issues. Education for Health (a newsletter issued by the WHO and the Sparkman Centre for International Public Health Education), 1985 (1):39-46. Report of a 1981 project to implement a strategy for teaching about dracunculiasis, malaria, onchocerciasis, and schistosomiasis in primary schools in Idere, Nigeria; with results of a baseline survey of knowledge and prevalence.