

LEPTOSPIRA POMONA INFECTION

IN A WOODCHUCK PRELIMINARY REPORT

In an epizootiological study of leptospirosis and brucellosis in cattle and wildlife in Chester County, Pa., *Leptospira pomona* was isolated from a southeastern woodchuck, *Marmota monax monax* (1). This was the first time *L. pomona* had been isolated from this species in the United States. Infection with *L. pomona* is common among cattle in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Materials and Methods

Kidney and urine specimens were removed aseptically. The kidney was ground with mortar and pestle and a 10 percent by volume suspension was made with Stuart's base liquid medium (Difco). The following media were employed: Fletcher's semisolid medium (Difco) containing 10 percent rabbit serum; Fletcher's semisolid medium containing 15 percent horse serum; Chang's semisolid medium (2), Hamilton, Mont., modification (3), containing 10 percent rabbit serum; Chang's semisolid medium containing 15 percent horse serum; and Stuart's semisolid medium (4) containing 10 percent rabbit serum. One set of media tubes was inoculated with 2-3 drops of kidney suspension and one set was inoculated with 1-2 drops of urine. Serial tenfold dilutions of kidney suspension were then made, with Stuart's base liquid medium, to approximate 10^{-2} , 10^{-3} , and 10^{-4} final dilutions. A 0.1-cc. inoculum of each of these dilutions was streaked on petri plates containing 30-35 cc. of Cox's (5) plate medium. Tubes and plates were in-

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cubated at 29° C. and examined at 7- to 10-day intervals. As the woodchuck was dead when delivered to our laboratory, it was not possible to determine the level of serum antibody.

Results

Growth of *L. pomona* was detected on the 14th day postinoculation. Organisms were present in one tube of Fletcher's semisolid medium with 10 percent rabbit serum inoculated with kidney tissue and in Fletcher's semisolid medium with 15 percent horse serum and Chang's semisolid medium with 10 percent rabbit serum inoculated with urine. Transfers of organisms were made into Fletcher's semisolid medium with 10 percent rabbit serum and subcultures were made at 30- to 40-day intervals. Cultures were sent to the WHO Reference Laboratory for Leptospirosis, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C., for typing, where the organisms were identified as *L. pomona*.

REFERENCES

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- (3) Reinhard, K. R.: Leptospiral techniques. Public Health Service, Rocky Mountain Laboratory, 1953. (Mimeographed.)
- (4) Roth, E. E.: Leptospirae research procedures. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Univ. Dept. Vet. Sc., 1958. (Mimeographed.)
- (5) Cox, C. D., and Larson, A. D.: Colonial growth of leptospirae. J. Bact. 73: 587-589, April 1957.

The Public Be Informed!

There is a distinction between publicity and reporting which I find is often completely unappreciated by scientists and businessmen alike. I am sure that the public relations people and reporters themselves are keenly aware of the difference. The reporter, the science writer, usually a full-time member of a press association or a newspaper staff, has a duty to be skeptical, questioning, inquiring, and to ferret out the hidden motives, the greed, the inconsistencies, and the purposefully or inadvertently slanted viewpoints. His is a service to the public. The person engaging in public relations is, on the other hand, hired by and answerable to a concern or a person who wants to get something into public print. He may work for an advertising agency, or he may work directly for a corporation, or, in these enlightened days, for research laboratories and scientific institutions.

Most of the public relations people have the high qualifications and, within their framework, the ethics of the best science writers. Many of them, of course, have been science writers and reporters for newspapers, and they have come into the work of public relations through that avenue. But it is important to realize that they are working for a person or institution that wants to get something into the newspapers. If their employers want something in the papers, it is the job of the public relations person to do his best to get it in, whether he is wholeheartedly in favor of it or not. That is his job. So you see that a person doing publicity must operate in a somewhat different way with different criteria from the science writers who are primarily interested in the way in which the public is informed.

If more scientists understood this distinction, recognized it, and applauded it, we would undoubtedly have better reporting of science. Strangely, the same scientists who would be appalled at slanting research results often assume that anybody who is writing for newspapers, particularly when handling their research reports, should take a public relations attitude toward them. This distinction between publicity and reporting is extremely important, and scientists should be reminded periodically.

I do not mean to imply that public relations efforts should not be undertaken or that the press agents, as they used to be called, do not serve a useful function.

The superior financial reward that comes to those who do publicity rather than reporting should be a matter of concern to those interested in the distribution of scientific information and opinion to the public through mass media. Repeatedly, those who have become experts in science writing and reporting cannot resist the temptation of considerably higher salaries obtainable from those who wish to have adequate public relations efforts.

Not all of the science writers are happier in writing for direct publication itself, through newspapers, magazines, and the like, but I believe most of them would prefer to do this than to do public relations. The deterrent to holding many of the best of the science writers in actual writing for newspapers and magazines is often the salary differential.

Another concern in the training, raising, nurturing, and feeding of science writers, particularly those who are beginning, consists of very different criteria for science writing than some of us, some four decades ago, hoped might exist. The plain fact is that many science writers now just do not know anything fundamentally about science, or at least they did not when they started in. I have had the conviction that a good science writer ought to be a hybrid, part scientist and part newspaperman, and to achieve this effective blend, it would be better to start off as a scientist of sorts rather than as a newspaper person. While many of the judgments of the good reporter are those of a good research person, that is, both must assay facts, draw conclusions, and have high integrity and a willingness to recede from preconceived notions, nevertheless in practice the research method is somewhat different, although not fundamentally, from the journalistic method. Every person who expects to make science writing a career really should get his hands dirty and his mind disturbed in some sort of a research laboratory.—*Excerpt from an address by Watson Davis, director, Science Service, when accepting the James T. Grady Medal for excellence in science writing, presented by the American Chemical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, April 7, 1960.*