

Pan American Health Organization

PAHO/ACMR 11/9
Original: English

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL RESEARCH

Washington, D. C.

19-23 June 1972

FIRST PAN AMERICAN SYMPOSIUM ON PARACOCCIDIOIDOMYCOSIS

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FIRST PAN AMERICAN SYMPOSIUM ON PARACOCCIDIOIDOMYCOSIS*

The First Pan American Symposium on Paracoccidioidomycosis was held in Medellín, Colombia, from October 25 to 27, 1971, under the auspices of the Pan American Health Organization.

The idea for it was born at the International Symposium on the Mycoses held in Washington, D. C., in February 1970, also under PAHO sponsorship. At that symposium Dr. José Ignacio Baldo of Venezuela asked that a standing committee be established to make new techniques of diagnosis and therapy for fungal diseases known to physicians and technicians in the Americas, and to institute and encourage fundamental research to improve diagnostic and therapeutic methods. Such a panel, designated the Coordinating Committee for the Mycoses, was formed under the PAHO Department of Research Development and Coordination. It was also suggested at the Washington symposium that scientists working on South American blastomycosis be given an opportunity to meet in detailed sessions to try to resolve some of the difficulties in controlling and treating the more than 1,500 new cases of the disease that arise yearly.

That suggestion led to the convening of the Symposium on Paracoccidioidomycosis in Medellín 20 months later after organization by the Coordinating Committee for the Mycoses. Initial plans for the meeting were made by Dr. Angela Restrepo, of the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, and Dr. Donald Greer, of the Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia, who agreed to function as ad hoc subcommittee chairmen. They were assisted by Dr. Libero Ajello, Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia; Dr. Charlotte C. Campbell, Harvard University, Boston; Dr. Mauricio Martins da Silva, Pan American Health Organization, Washington, D.C.; and Dr. Mario Robledo V., Medellín.

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The Symposium was attended by 110 scientists from 13 countries representing many of the most prominent names in medical mycology in North, Central and South America. The formal speakers alone represented eight countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Additionally, Costa Rica and Guatemala were represented at the business meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the Mycoses, held in conjunction with the symposium.

The primary function of the symposium was the exchange of information about the problem caused by human Paracoccidioides brasiliensis infection. It is not possible here to outline the scope of the subject matter considered; this will be reported comprehensively in papers to be published as proceedings of the Symposium which are now in preparation.

There were 11 scientific sessions, each lasting two or more hours. These sessions considered: (1) the pathogenic organism, its morphology, ultrastructure, and composition; (2) the ecology and epidemiology of South American blastomycosis; (3) the clinical management and treatment of infections; (4) pathologic, immunologic, and diagnostic features and their interrelationships; and (5) studies of new experimental treatments and control methods.

Two things made this Symposium an especially worthwhile one to those who attended. First, it dealt exhaustively with a single disease entity. There was enough time to delve--in minutest detail--into the many problems that concerned those present. One of the purposes of the symposium was to help clarify certain conflicting inferences and impressions. Time was accordingly allowed for this in the question-and-answer and discussion periods that were the highlights of the sessions. Second, the high number of internationally-recognized authorities present--19 invited experts and 29 speakers chosen on the basis of abstracts they submitted about their work--resulted in a high quality program that was exceptionally comprehensive.

This quality, may be exemplified by listing some of the findings that will be reported in the Proceedings. New information was presented on:

(1) the growth requirements of P. brasiliensis, including a new growth medium; (2) the glucan and chitin composition of the organism's wall; (3) the nature of multiple budding; (4) the ecology of the organism in South America and the endemic and epidemiologic sequelae, especially in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru; (5) the relationships and diversities of three types of paracoccidioidin preparations for skin-testing; (6) the pathologic progress of infection in the lungs and in disseminated lesions; (7) therapy and care of the patient with paracoccidioidomycosis, including the use of amphotericin B in conjunction with sulfonamides and supportive therapy by blood transfusion and nutritional build-up; (8) steroid and hormonal influences on the organism's growth, and, (9) new serologic methodology for diagnosis and prognosis of South American blastomycosis.

The Coordinating Committee for the Mycoses and its subcommittees met in conjunction with the symposium. There have been several accomplishments as a direct consequence of the meeting. These are a trial of new skin-test reagent for coccidioidomycosis, a specialized training course for serology technicians, a multilingual laboratory manual for medical mycology, and the inception of a 10-year program of research into improved methods for diagnosing and treating mycologic disease and training technicians in related laboratory procedures. These are discussed in the paper "Multinational Program for Research and Technical Training in the Mycoses" to be submitted to the Special Meeting of Ministers of Health scheduled for 2-14 October, 1972, in Santiago, Chile.