

directing council



PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
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XI Meeting

regional committee

WORLD
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Washington, D.C.
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Topic 19: STUDY OF MYCOSES IN THE AMERICAS

(Topic proposed by the Government of Venezuela)

In accordance with a communication from the Minister of Health and Social Welfare of Venezuela (Annex I), and pursuant to Article 14-c of the Rules of Procedure of the Directing Council, the above topic has been included on the agenda of the present meeting.

The Director has the honor to transmit to the Directing Council the afore-mentioned communication, together with the study document (Annex II) which accompanied it.

Annex I : Communication from the Government of Venezuela

Annex II: Study of Mycoses in the Americas

No. SI-58

Caracas, 4 February 1959

Dr. Abraham L. Horwitz
Director, Pan American Sanitary Bureau
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Horwitz:

In conformity with Article 14 of the Rules of Procedure of the Directing Council, I have the honor to submit to you our Government's request to include on the agenda of the XI Meeting of the Council, to be held this year, the topic "Study of Mycoses in the Americas." For this purpose, I am enclosing two multigraphed copies of the study document and a proposed resolution on this topic.

In view of the ever-growing importance of this group of diseases, and considering the interest shown by many researchers in gaining a more thorough knowledge of the factors that make the mycoses a problem of concern to the public health administrations, I feel certain of the benefits to be gained from the discussion of this problem in this high governing body of the Pan American Health Organization.

Very truly yours,

(Signed)

E. Santo Mendoza
Minister of Health and
Social Welfare

"STUDY OF MYCOSES IN THE AMERICAS"

Coordinating Committee

for a Nation-wide Study of Mycoses

Venezuelan Experience

I

Gradually and spontaneously, largely through individual effort, knowledge of the mycoses in Venezuela has been increasing, especially in the last decades.

At the VI Venezuelan Congress of Medical Sciences, held in Caracas, 18-26 November 1955, under the auspices of the National Academy of Medicine, the committee charged with discussing Dr. Humberto Campins' paper "Deep Endemic Mycoses in Venezuela" recommended that, in view of the importance of the problem, a National Mycology Center be established. Thus the fact that the mycoses were a matter calling for specific measures, on a nation-wide scale, came to be recognized.

That proposal awakened considerable interest in a group of scientists, who believed, however, that it would be better to establish not a center but a committee, whose purpose would be to coordinate all of the nation's services, both private and governmental, that devote part or all of their efforts to the study of mycoses. Initial contacts having been satisfactorily made with various individuals and institutions, the idea was presented at the I Venezuelan Congress of Public Health, which was organized by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and other official and scientific agencies and held in Caracas, 19-25 November 1956. The memorandum presented at that meeting recommended the study of mycoses in the manner described above, and, owing to the importance of the mycotic diseases in the field of public health today, approval was given to the inclusion of the subject as an annex to the proposal entitled "New Fields of Action for Public Health in Venezuela." It was also agreed to transmit the text to the National Institute of Health, the highest scientific body interested in that subject. Moreover, at the V National Meetings on Pathological Anatomy, which took place in Valencia, State of Carabobo, from 30 January to 2 February 1957, a project was presented and discussed, with plans for its development receiving warm support.

Those ideas were given concrete expression at an assembly that was highly representative of persons interested in mycology throughout the country. The meeting took place at the National Tuberculosis Institute, on the occasion of the Annual Technical-Administrative Seminar of the Tuberculosis Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, held in Caracas, 10-12 April 1957, and it had the support of the Department of Public Health. There the undeniable existence of the mycoses problem in Venezuela was recognized and support was given the proposal for a coordination committee for a nation-wide study of the disease. The committee was composed of 13 persons specialized in the various phases to be covered by the study (clinicians, mycologists, bacteriologists, parasitologists, pathologists, dermatologists, epidemiologists, otorhinolaryngologists, and odontologists).

By statutory provision, the Coordinating Committee for a Nation-wide Study of Mycoses, an autonomous agency with headquarters in Caracas, has as its purpose the coordination of all activities tending to promote, organize, and carry out the study of mycoses in Venezuela. To this end, it encourages cooperative relations and meetings with institutions and individuals, both national and foreign, that pursue the same interests. It may appoint such subcommittees as it considers necessary to its work and it enjoys the advice of outstanding specialists within the country and abroad.

Without encroaching upon the territory of individual researchers and institutions, the Committee has a broad field of endeavor. It seeks to establish contact among those interested in mycological problems, it requests and provides consultant services, it files national clinical reports, and it carries forward plans for a national mycology archive. Furthermore, it helps bring about standardization in research techniques, it will furnish antigens and offer the diagnostic facilities of specialized laboratories, it plans studies of various types in accordance with data received, it drafts the standards to be followed in such studies by participating individuals and institutions, and it receives and apportions such funds as it can obtain from various sources for those purposes.

Maximum respect for individual initiative and for the scientific work of researchers constitutes the moral prerequisite on which the above-mentioned objectives are based. Scientific rights and priorities are safeguarded; it is only with the consent of the authors that unpublished information is used and, in the case of published material, regular bibliographic practice is followed.

II

In the relatively short period in which the Coordinating Committee for a Nation-wide Study of Mycoses has been in operation in Venezuela, it has produced results that are quite encouraging. They include the following:

1. The establishment of a central registry for cases of mycoses. It was defined as a central office located in the capital -Caracas- and its function was to be that of collecting and presenting, for statistical analysis and interpretation, all of the information contained in the clinical histories prepared by special subcommittees, taking into consideration the opinions of outstanding scientists within the country and abroad. Agreement was reached on the point that the information gathered by the central registry will be utilized solely for the purpose of contributing to the knowledge of the persons and institutions that participate in the study, and of coordinating and orienting appropriate research. The clinical reports will be the property of those who furnish the data and will not be used for the preparation of scientific studies except by their authors -unless, when scientific or health considerations make the provision of supplementary data necessary, the Committee seeks the written consent of the authors to make use of unpublished recorded cases.

2. Plans have been made for the establishment of subcommittees which, in due course, will study the problem of the nomenclature and treatment of mycoses.

3. Agreement was reached on the establishment of a bibliographic bulletin, to contain book and periodical citations furnished by members of the Committee.

4. Standards were drawn up to govern the procedure for, and the interpretation of, intradermic tests.

5. A plan presented by the Tuberculosis Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was carried out, consisting of a histoplasmic, coccidioidinic, tuberculin, and radiological survey of the town of Cumanacoa, State of Sucre. Nearly 10,000 persons were covered, with 70 mm photofluorography given to all individuals and 30 x 40 cms radiography to all those who showed pathological or simply atypical pulmonary pictures. The survey was completed in three months.

The Committee has continued this type of activity for the purpose of preparing an epidemiological map of mycoses in Venezuela.

6. The above-mentioned survey was carried out with the generous and valuable cooperation of distinguished North Americans who contributed not only technical advice but also the antigens that are being used. In this connection, mention should be made of Dr. Forrest W. Cross (Chief, Biologics Preparation Laboratory, Tuberculosis Program, Division of Special Health Services, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D. C.), who was good enough to furnish all the histoplasmin used in the survey and in subsequent research, and Dr. Charles E. Smith (University of California School of Public Health), who supplied all the coccidioidin used in those programs. A vote of thanks is due also to the Committee on Acute Respiratory Diseases, Epidemiological Board, Armed Forces of the United States.

7. Another scientist of world renown with whom the Committee has been in contact and who has lent invaluable collaboration is Dr. Libero Ajello (Scientist Director, in Charge of Mycology Unit, Communicable Disease Center, Public Health Service, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, U.S.A.), who cooperated in the serological testing of cases in the afore-mentioned survey.

8. In relation to the problem of preparing antigens and conducting the complement fixation tests, the Committee last year called upon the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for the necessary financial support, which permitted the immunologist of the Institute of Tropical Medicine of the School of Medicine, Central University of Venezuela, to undertake studies in the Laboratories of Serology, Mycology, and Microbiology of the Communicable Disease Center of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, in Chamblee, Georgia. This work was done under the direction of Dr. Libero Ajello.

Thanks to the Committee's initiative, a modern serological laboratory has been installed in the above-mentioned Institute of Tropical Medicine, where satisfactory results have already been obtained in the preparation of antigens of the yeastlike phase of Paracoccidioides brasiliensis, of Blastomyces dermatitidis, and of Histoplasma capsulatum. Moreover, the technique for the complement fixation test has been established.

The Committee has as one of its objectives helping to establish two more laboratories in other parts of the country.

9. A plan has been drawn up for furnishing the national universities with photographic material for teaching purposes, to show the principal mycoses in the different aspects with which the instruction will deal.

A brief written statement will go with the films, and the running time for each film on a particular mycosis will be 45 minutes.

10. A proposal has been drawn up for a national mycosis archive, whose regulations envisage its operation under the direction of a technical council, which will set the policy for its relations with institutions and individuals, both national and foreign.

11. In order to summarize simply and clearly the basic information on the principal mycoses, the Committee has issued a booklet entitled Cartilla Micológica, which contains a brief description of each of the mycoses, with stress being placed on definition, epidemiology, clinical aspect, diagnosis, and treatment. The booklet is directed especially to the medical profession and to students in the last two years of the medical sciences. Its purpose is to awaken interest in those studies and to help recall the basic facts required for the successful cooperation of the profession in the development of the Committee's programs.

12. Extremely significant in terms of moral as well as material support are the cooperative relations between the Committee and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The Committee has also strengthened its relations with the national universities, whose rectors have offered warm and decided support, and it has adopted a similar attitude with respect to the National Academy of Science, the Venezuelan Medical Federation, the Venezuelan Foundation for the Advancement of Science, and other scientific institutions, all of which have voiced their encouragement.

III

Taking into consideration the Venezuelan experience in the field of mycological research, which is described in the present document, the Government of Venezuela takes the liberty of presenting to the XI Meeting of the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization, for its consideration, the following draft resolution:

Draft Resolution

Coordinating Committees for the Study
of Mycoses and Epidemiological Surveys

The Directing Council,

Considering that the type of agency known in Venezuela as the Coordinating Committee for a Nation-wide Study of Mycoses has proved to be extremely useful in introducing the valuable collaboration of private initiative into the official institutions in charge of public health programs; and

Bearing in mind that the most recommended method for ascertaining the magnitude of the mycoses problem in the Americas is through epidemiological surveys that are carefully planned and evaluated,

RESOLVES:

1. To recommend to the Member Countries of the Pan American Health Organization that they promote the creation of coordinating committees, of nation-wide scope, for the study of mycoses.
2. To recommend to the Member Countries of the Pan American Health Organization the undertaking of epidemiological surveys as a means of ascertaining the magnitude of the problem of mycoses in the Americas.



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Topic 19: STUDY OF MYCOSES IN THE AMERICAS

(Topic proposed by the Government of Venezuela)

ADDENDUM

Experience in Venezuela

The Coordinating Committee on the national study of mycoses will hold, jointly with the IV Venezuelan Congress of Phthisiology and Pneumonology, a Symposium on Mycoses which will take place in Venezuela in December 1959, with the participation of Venezuelan specialists and especially invited experts from abroad. The Symposium will be held immediately after the discussion at the Congress of the working document "Deep Mycoses in Venezuela, with Special Reference to Pulmonary Mycoses," which will be conducted under the direction of the Coordinating Committee.

The Department of Chronic Diseases and Adult Hygiene of the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare has instructed all the services of the primary network of the campaign against tuberculosis and the antileprosy services of the country's health units, to collaborate with all physicians in the practice of intradermal reactions: histoplasmic coccidioidinic, and tuberculin. In the circular containing those instructions mention is made of the institutions where complement fixation tests and histopathological and mycological studies (culture and inoculations) can also be made, and a detailed description is given of the procedures to be followed for obtaining best success in transmitting the samples.

In addition to these investigations of a general nature, special surveys with histoplasmin, coccidioidin, and tuberculin in children under 15 years of age have been started in 10 of the country's antituberculosis dispensaries. These surveys include 70 mm photofluorography and radiographs, the results of which will be incorporated in the chapter on epidemiology, appearing in the above-mentioned working document. On the other hand, a survey was completed of approximately 8,000 persons in the Yumare region, State of Yaracuy, that included the afore-mentioned antigen tests, in addition to a leishmanin test, 70 mm photofluorography, and radiographs. This information will also be included in the chapter on epidemiology.

In order to arouse greater interest among physicians and medical students in the knowledge of mycoses, the Committee has issued a second revised edition of the booklet Cartilla Micológica, in 10,000 copies which are being distributed to those professionals.