

THE ABSTRACT OF A RADIO ADDRESS GIVING PRACTICAL INFORMATION ON UNCINARIASIS

Dr. J. G. Bajandas, Chief of the Bureau of Rural Sanitation of the Department of Health, in an address which was broadcasted by radio recently in Porto Rico presented the problem of anemia. The following is an abstract of the address:

Uncinariasis infection is most intense in the rural zones of Porto Rico. Statistics show that morbidity in our most congested regions varies from eighty-five to ninety-five per cent. In short, out of one hundred rural inhabitants, eighty-five or ninety-five suffer from uncinariasis.

As may be already understood, anemia and uncinariasis are synonymous in Porto Rico, and when I say that anemia is a disease of extreme morbidity in the Island, I mean to state that uncinariasis is highly difusible, extending, dominating and affecting a large portion of the population. The infection is however not confined to the rural districts, but according to examinations that have been made, it varies from forty-five to fifty per cent in the urban zones.

The problem of combating this disease is gigantic, and while the Department of Health, in cooperation with the International Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, is carrying on a vigorous campaign to suppress the disease, the seriousness of the problem should be recognized by the people of Porto Rico and their hearty cooperation should be given in the intensive campaign which is being carried on to do away with this deadly parasite.

The spirit of cooperation shown by the public has helped in making this campaign a success, and we are confident that this same spirit will increase more and more.

It is already commonly known that the essential factor which propagates uncinariasis is the infestation of the soil due to lack of latrines among the poorer classes. When one considers that one parasite can produce 10,000 eggs a day, thus increasing the larvae to tremendous numbers, one can grasp some idea of the rapidity with which this disease spreads. Brazil is considered to be a zone of extreme infection and yet the sick people of that country carry only 130 parasites per capita, while the moderately sick people of Porto Rico carry an average of two hundred parasites. Calculating that one parasite can produce 10,000 eggs a day and that the average

person living in the rural districts has two hundred parasites, male and female, in his intestines, that person can expel at least 1,000,000 eggs a day or an incalculable amount of larvae which transmit the disease.

These figures are at first sight appalling, yet if the plan outlined by experts who have studied the situation is consistently carried out the soil of Porto Rico will be free from infestation at no late date, and the rural population will be freed from this loathesome plague.

The larva of the *uncinaria* lives only six weeks under ordinary normal conditions, hence infestation is done away with as soon as the breeding of parasites is cut off. The compulsory building of latrines which is being enforced by the Department of Health through the activities of the Bureau of Rural Sanitation is already bringing results in both the rural and urban zones, and there is every reason to believe that with a ready response from the public in general, Anemia—the plague of Porto Rico—will soon be a thing of the past.

