CONTROL OF ASCARIS

Recent advances in our knowledge of the epidemiology of ascariasis and the results of field investigations after sanitary campaigns for hookworm control have shown that the reduction of the ascaris burden either in families or in a community as a whole, is not reduced by the ordinary control measures to the same extent as is that of hookworm. Cort and his colleagues in Panamá were definitely able to reduce the hookworm burden under a developing household sanitation program, but could not appreciably control the spread of ascaris infection. Cort, Otto and Spindler working in Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, found that more than half of the families provided with, and using latrines were as heavily infected as those without latrines. Furthermore, they found a considerable body of evidence from their egg count studies indicating that treatment was not effective in the control of ascaris. For instance, in a group treated with oil of chenopodium the egg counts demonstrated that reinfection returned after seven months to one and one-half times the pre-treatment level, even though the first treatment was 90 per cent effective. Ascaris infection rapidly returns after treatment, whereas the hookworm incidence is more or less reduced by mass treatment, as has been repeatedly demonstrated.

A more recent intensive study of ascaris control measures and egg counts, made on a Porto Rican estate over a twelve-month period, has not only checked these findings but has demonstrated some other points of interest. It has further emphasized the difficulty of ascaris control in large families and in those with small children. In families with four or more children with a high average worm burden before treatment, infection returned in most instances as early as the fourth month after treatment. For example, 65 per cent of the people in twenty-five families with latrines for twenty-five years were infected with ascaris. Nine months after treatment 30 per cent were reinfested, of these, 78 per cent were children under fourteen years of age. Moreover, not only was the incidence of reinfestation high, but the egg counts after reinfection were as high as in the pre-treatment period. The hookworm incidence in the same group was 80 per cent before treatment, but nine months later it was only 10 per cent.

Dr. Arturo L. Carrión of the department of bacteriology of the School of Tropical Medicine has left San Juan to spend a year with Dr. J. Gardner Hopkins in dermatology at the Medical Center, New York City.

Dr. R. Rodríguez Molina of the department of medical zoology, School of Tropical Medicine has left San Juan to spend a year doing special work at the School of Hygiene and Public Health, Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Richard Thompson, from the department of bacteriology, Columbia University, has arrived in San Juan to do special field work in bacteriology at the School of Tropical Medicine.