

M A L A R I A

Malaria is probably the most widespread of all the tropical diseases. Vivax malaria is widespread in tropics and subtropics. Plasmodium malariae is found mostly in the hot humid climates. P. malariae has similar distribution as P. vivax but its occurrence is patchy. Ovale malaria exists mainly in West Africa. This endemic disease has swept the tropics with several epidemics. The Ceylon epidemic of 1934-1935 caused nearly 3 million cases of malaria and 82,000 deaths; Brazil epidemic of 1938 was caused by an invasion by A. gambiae and resulted 100,000 cases with 14,000 deaths. An epidemic in lower Egypt in 1942-1944 caused about 16,000 cases with more than 12,000 deaths and an epidemic in Ethiopia in 1958 caused more than 3 million cases and 150,000 deaths (Bruce-Chawatt, 1971). Malaria is not only a problem with tropical countries; imported malaria has become a serious entity in America and some European countries. Since 1966, the annual incidence of malaria cases diagnosed in USA has risen to over 2,500 (Fisher, 1969). There were 3,806 cases in 1969 and 3,997 case in 1970 in the USA. In UK about 150 cases are diagnosed every year (Bruce-Chawatt, 1971).

At one time malaria was the predominant disease in Nepal. Forested area of the Tarai was hyper-endemic belt whereas the plain cultivated area of the Tarai and the hilly valley were hypoendemic regions and only the hilly region above 4,000ft. altitude was free of malaria. Malaria control has been a great success in Nepal and it has opened up the whole southern belt of the country for development and resettlement, the single big factor which has contributed to the recent economic development and progress of Nepal. This success though very significant should not lead to complacency. There was a set-back to the malaria eradication in Ceylon in 1967 due to resurgence of vivax epidemic with about one million cases. An increase of malaria has also been reported from north and central India and from some areas of Pakistan and other countries in S. E. Asia. We have to be vigilant that this episode does not re-occur in Nepal too. The gain of the malaria control has to be maintained and need to be consolidated though the programme is said to be in the terminal phase (deadline for assistance from WHO/USAID : 1973).

Ref :

1. Bruce - Chawatt, L. J. (1971) : Tropical Doctor, Vol. 1 No. 4
2. Bruce - Chawatt (1969) : Bull. N. Y. Acad. Med. May
3. Fisher (1969) : " " "