

The zoonosis of animal parasites in Iraq. XI. A case of hydatid cyst of the spleen

by

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Limited information is available concerning hydatid disease in Iraq and the occasional human infections which have been reported in medical literature have been published, for the most part, in local journals that are not readily accessible in many other parts of the world. It is the primary purpose of this paper to report a case of hydatid cyst of the spleen.

CASE HISTORY

L. A., a 40 year old Arab housewife from the town of Hilla (Central Iraq), about 4 years ago noticed a slight pain on her right side. Approximately 2 years ago, she first became aware of a mass in her abdomen, and during the past year the mass appeared to have grown, initiating occasional intense pain. Upon visiting a physician in the city of Baghdad, her case was diagnosed as malaria splenomegaly and surgery was advised. Being afraid, the patient declined surgery. Recently, the pain became so intense that the patient visited one of us (A. K.) in his clinic. The pain was in the left hypochondriac region, exaggerated by movement. The patient stated that she did not feel comfortable lying on her right side and preferred to sleep either on her back or turned slightly to her right. Since the patient gave a history of having had malaria 10 years previously, her condition was again diagnosed as malarial splenomegaly. She was admitted to the Republic Hospital at Hilla for surgery. The usual preoperative procedures were given and the only blood picture taken was her type, O. The patient was brought to surgery the day after admittance to the hospital.

The patient was placed in a supine position and the induction of intra-

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tracheal anaesthesia was accomplished. A laparotomy was effected through the left paramedian incision, its upper end curved laterally and parallel to the lower rib margin. Examination of the viscera revealed nothing abnormal apart from a huge spleen adherent to the omentum, diaphragm, and ascending colon. Freeing of these viscera was done by blunt and sharp dissection. The spleen was now quite movable. A large cyst which occupied approximately 90 % of the spleen was observed. About 20 ml of 10 % formalin were injected before handling the organ. The short gastric vessel was clamped and cut. The pedicle also was clamped and cut between the two blades and a transection suture was used. The spleen was excised. The patient took two pints of blood. The abdomen was closed in layers and the patient was taken from the operating room in good condition. Recovery was uneventful and the patient was discharged in less than 10 days.

DISCUSSION

The hydatid cyst removed was a large oval structure (Fig. 1), whose over-all dimensions were about $21 \times 15 \times 12$ cm. Upon dissecting the cyst, it was observed that the germinal membrane was intact and approximately one and a half quarts of cystic fluid were removed. Microscopical examination of the hydatid sand revealed the presence of hundreds of scolices.

In discussing the epidemiology of hydatid disease with the patient, it was learned that a Casoni test, given six months previous to the operation, gave negative results. No history of ownership or association with dogs was given. When asked how she thought she acquired the hydatid cyst, she attributed it to nervousness.

Hydatid disease of the spleen probably is not uncommon in Iraq, but there are no reliable statistics in this regard. Except for several records of hydatid cyst of this organ in the reports of the Central Pathology Institute (1939-1942), the writers are aware of only one other such publication (2). In general, very little information has been published on echinococcosis in Iraq, although the disease appears to be endemic (1). It is highly possible that the case herein concerned may have acquired her infection locally, since 8 of 12 dogs examined by us in Hilla harboured infections with *Echinococcus granulosus*. On the other hand, since the disease is apparently uniformly distributed throughout the Central and Southern areas of the country, the acquisition of the infection elsewhere is also possible.

Stray dogs are common in most large cities, towns, and villages of Iraq and eradication programs usually are not regularly exercised. Indirect infections by the ingestion of contaminated foodstuffs containing the infective ova may sometimes occur. Lettuce and parsley are commonly eaten by persons of nearly all age groups in Iraq, sometimes directly from the field with little or no washing. Such food may act as a potential source of infection to man.



Fig. 1. Photograph showing massive hydatid cyst of the spleen.

SUMMARY

A case of hydatid disease of the spleen is reported. Since the patient gave no history of association with dogs, and indirect mode of infection is suspected.

RESUMEN

Los autores dan a conocer un caso de quiste hidático del bazo en una mujer árabe habitante de Iraq Central. Se discute la epidemiología del caso y se sospecha que la paciente se haya infectado indirectamente, ya que no se pudo demostrar asociación con perros.

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