

RECENT GUINEA WORM RUMOUR INVESTIGATION REPORTS AND COMMENTS ON RELATED PUBLICATIONS IN JOURNAL OF PARASITIC DISEASES

1. Guinea worm (*Dracunculus medinensis*) in Rajasthan, India: A case report by S.L. Choubisa, P.G. Department of Zoology, S.B.P. Government College, M.L. Sukhadia University, Dungarpur – 314001, Rajasthan, India. Published in Journal of Parasitic Diseases, Vol. 26(2) December 2002, pp.105-106.

This publication reports about a 28 year female from Dungarpur and worm extracted in the surgical ward on 8th July, 1997. The alleged case of Guinea worm in this case report was a rumor case and was very much in the knowledge of the State Health Authorities. It was surprising that the paper was published after a gap of over 5 years of its alleged occurrence. The records of this rumor case were available with the state government and were accessible to both the International Certification Team and also the Independent Appraisal team which preceded the visit of International Certification Team

2. Dracunculiasis in tribal region of southern Rajasthan, India: a case report by S.L. Choubisa, Rakesh Verma, Leela Choubisa published in J Parasit Dis (July-Dec 2010) 34 (2):94-96 DOI 10.1007/s12639-010-0017-0.

The publication reports about a 40 year old male who was admitted in the surgical ward on 4th September, 2006. Since this case was published after a gap of 4 years of its alleged occurrence it was not possible to epidemiologically investigate it. Neither the principal author nor the peer reviewer could provide any confirmatory evidence of its being guinea worm despite our repeated requests. However a combined team of experts from the directorate of Rajasthan and NCDC, Delhi after interviewing the health staff, villagers, community leaders and other concerned officials concluded that this was not a case of Guinea worm.

Director, NCDC wrote to the Principal author of these publications requesting to provide evidence of these cases. Also a team of experts from NCDC and Directorate of Rajasthan met him to obtain the evidence of the cases being Guinea worm. The Principal author could not provide any credible evidence. The Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Parasitic Diseases was approached to share the comments of the Peer Reviewers and also the evidence based on which these articles were published. No satisfactory reply of their being Guinea worm cases was received. Both the Principal author of these publications and the Editor-in-Chief of JPD were requested to bring a corrigendum to this effect and their response to this is awaited. An Expert Group met under the chairmanship of DGHS on 8 May 2012 and concluded that the publications referred here were not based on any confirmed evidence A letter to Editor, JPD, was approved by this Expert Group and the same has been submitted to the Editor of JPD for publication. The contents of the Letter to the Editor, JPD as approved by the Expert Group are given below:

LETTER TO EDITOR, JOURNAL OF PARASITIC DISEASES

Subject: Comments on two publications on Guinea worm in Rajasthan, published in December 2002 and July-December 2010 issues of JPD

The guinea worm disease was endemic in seven states including Rajasthan. Guinea worm Eradication Programme was launched in 1984 with NCDC (then known as NICD) as the nodal implementing agency. The last case of Guinea worm was reported from District Jodhpur of Rajasthan in July, 1996. India maintained a Guinea worm free status for next 3 years and then invited International Certification Team for verification. The International Certification Team gave its recommendations and India was declared Guinea worm free country in February, 2000. In these backdrops, the following two publications in Journal of Parasitic Diseases, which are not based on any confirmatory evidence, are being contradicted :

Guinea worm (*Dracunculus medinensis*) in Rajasthan, India: A case report by S.L. Choubisa, Journal of Parasitic Diseases, Vol. 26(2) December 2002, pp.105-106.

This publication reports about a 28 year female from Durgapur where it is claimed that worm was extracted in a surgical ward on 8th July, 1997. This alleged case was a rumor case and was very much in the knowledge of the State Health Authorities who have the written records indicating that it was not a guinea worm case. These records were accessible to both Independent Appraisal team and the International Certification Team. Surprisingly, the paper was published after a gap of over 5 years of its alleged occurrence.

Dracunculiasis in tribal region of southern Rajasthan, India: a case report by S.L. Choubisa, Rakesh Verma, Leela Choubisa J Parasit Dis ,July-Dec 2010, 34 (2):94-96

It reports about a 40 year old male who was admitted in a surgical ward on 4th September, 2006. Since this case was published after a gap of 4 years of its alleged occurrence it was not possible to epidemiologically investigate it, however neither the principal author nor the Journal could provide any confirmatory evidence of its being guinea worm despite our repeated requests. A combined team of experts from the directorate of Rajasthan and NCDC, Delhi after interviewing the health staff, villagers, community leaders and other concerned officials concluded that this was not a case of Guinea worm and was perhaps a worm similar to the one reported in September, 2011 from Udaipur district (adjacent district of Durgapur) which was confirmed NOT TO BE a guinea worm by Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI,) Izatnagar using molecular tests.

In the post Guinea worm eradication phase any rumor of a suspect case needs to be thoroughly investigated epidemiologically and carrying out the study of morphological features of the alleged worm in detail and conducting histological and molecular characterization as and when required.

None of such things was done in any of the two published articles which surprisingly were published years after the alleged cases had occurred. In the light of the epidemiological investigation carried out by NCDC and technical experts from the concerned state, it can be safely concluded that these were not cases of guinea worm. This view has also been endorsed by an Expert Group.

Dr. L. S. Chauhan
Director, NCDC

3. Guinea worm rumour from district Udaipur, Rajasthan in September 2011

A rumour regarding extraction of Narubala (local name for Guinea Worm) was reported from district Udaipur, Rajasthan from 45 year old male Shri Rodaji Patel R/o Kali Margi, Village Gudali, Block Bambora in September, 2011 from Udaipur district (adjacent district of Dungarpur). The rumour was investigated by the NCDC and State team. An expert group at NCDC discussed the investigation report and examined the worm. Based on the epidemiological features and gross morphology of the worm it was concluded that the worm was not conforming to the known features of Guinea worm. However, the group recommended that the worm should be sent to IVRI, Izatnagar for molecular testing so that the Guinea worm could be conclusively excluded or confirmed. IVRI based on morphological features and molecular characterization of the 18-S ribosomal RNA gene concluded that the specimen of the worm tested is not Guinea worm. The results of IVRI, Izatnagar have been endorsed by an Expert Group and have also been shared with WHO.