

According To Dr. Oliver

Another Mysterious Bacterium Has Appeared?

Although it hasn't received the publicity of the deadly disease which struck in the summer of 1976, another mysterious bacterium has appeared—this one affecting people living in coastal areas of the Southeastern United States.

And like the Legionnaire's disease, this bacterium is a killer.

Thus far the bacterium has been found only in salt water. Of those persons infected by this pathogen, a high percentage have died.

Dr. James D. Oliver, a microbiologist at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, is pioneering research on this newly discovered microorganism. He doesn't want to push the panic button for persons living or visiting coastal areas, but the evidence suggests some caution should be taken.

"There seem to be two ways humans can acquire the organism," said Dr. Oliver. "One is through a cut in the skin, and the other is through ingestion of contaminated seafoods."

Once inside the body, the organism apparently produces a toxin that causes the water in the blood to be lost to the body tissues. "The blood develops a molasses consistency which does not circulate," said Dr. Oliver.

The symptoms include swelling and decay of tissues, severe low blood pressure, shock and inflammation of the skin.

The disease can be easily treated by current antibiotics, but the problem is identifying it in time. Dr. Oliver said hospital laboratories haven't traditionally used salt in media employed in testing to identify bacteria. Without

salt, the bacterium—which has been labeled lactose-positive Vibrio—dies quickly.

Dr. Oliver said a few hospitals in coastal areas are now using salt in their testing procedures. Because the bacterium thrives in salt solutions, it is thus easier to identify.

The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta reported nearly 70 clinical cases of the disease from 1976 to 1978.

In a report published early this year, Dr. Paul Blake of the CDC's micro-biology division did a case history study on 39 persons infected by the disease. There is a strong indication that persons with a liver dysfunction are more susceptible to infection. There is also evidence that people are being infected by eating raw oysters which are contaminated with the bacterium. Of the 39 cases in Dr.

Blake's report, 24 were infected through ingestion, resulting in 11 deaths. Twenty-three of the 24 had some type of liver ailment, and 19 had eaten raw oysters just prior to their illness.

Dr. Oliver said the bacterium can penetrate the skin through an opening as "slight as an ant bite."

The CDC has done the only two case studies on this type of bacteria. It was the CDC's first report on 38 cases in 1976 which got Dr. Oliver and one of his graduate students interested in the organism.

As a project for his master's degree, Mike Poole, now a third-year medical student at UNC-Chapel Hill, began research on how this bacterium infected a variety of laboratory animals. This study provided the first experimental data on the pathogenesis of the organism.

Mice, hamsters and rabbits were selected for the experiment which was sponsored by a grant from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Heart Association. Bacterial samples were obtained from the CDC and placed in the drinking water of the animals in a UNCC laboratory. Other animals were injected with the bacteria.

Dr. Oliver and Poole found that the animals in some cases died within a three-hour period after being infected, one of the most rapid death rates reported in this type of research.

They also did surgery on rats and rabbits, placing the organism in the intestinal tract. They planned to reopen the incision 13 or 14 hours later to study how the organs had been affected, but the animals kept dying before the time was up.

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PAGE APPOINTMENT

Boris Brumit DeLaine was appointed by Lt. Governor Jimmy Green to serve as a Page in the North Carolina Senate during the week of April 2 - April 6. Boris' parents are Mr. & Mrs. B. B. DeLaine.

Reasons To Have Headaches

Headaches. Who doesn't have them, right? If the truth were known there are probably more reasons to have headaches than not to have them.

For example, it's raining outside and the kids stayed home because it's a holiday and while you were breaking up the latest in a series of all day fights you forgot about the oven and tonight's dinner has now taken on the appearance of soggy charcoal.

You guessed it, the common tension headache. It is usually relieved by a couple of aspirin and a couple of quiet minutes. An extended vacation is optional.

Most headaches are nothing to worry about. However, if they come on suddenly with no apparent reason and persist for a couple of days, they should be investigated by your physician.

If the headache is situated above one eye it is likely to be caused by sinusitis. If it comes on abruptly and is worsened by eye movements it might be due to eyestrain. Another, but less likely, possibility is that it might be due to glaucoma, a serious disorder which increases the pressure within the eyeball itself. Left untreated glaucoma can lead to blindness.

Perhaps the most severe type of headache is the migraine. It is an intense headache and typically affects women more often than men and tends to run in families. The migraine may last anywhere from several hours to a couple of days and may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

If you suffer from migraines your physician may be able to prescribe medication to lessen the attack. It may or may not be comforting to know that most cases of migraine attacks tend to taper off and stop after 50 years of age.

MCPD Invites

You To Try

Family Camping

Looking for an activity the whole family can enjoy? The Mecklenburg County Parks Department invites you to try camping.

A parent-child camp-out will be held April 21-22 at McDowell Park on South 49.

Activities will begin Saturday at 10 a.m. Guided nature hikes, free paddle boats, nature crafts for children, a campfire singalong and fishing will be featured.

The \$4.00 sites will include electricity, water, grill, picnic areas and firewood. For \$3.00, the site has everything but electricity, and the primitive \$2.00 sites have tents, water and firewood only.

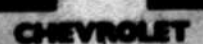
For more information contact McDowell Park at 588-1436.

Keep your out-of-town friends informed on what's happening in Charlotte by sending them a copy of the Charlotte Post each week. The cost is only \$13.52 per year.

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