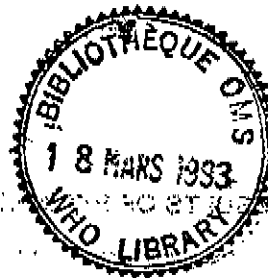




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PYRIMETHAMINE^a CHEMOPROPHYLAXIS FOR ZONOTIC CUTANEOUS LEISHMANIASIS CAUSED BY *LEISHMANIA MAJOR*

by

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Zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis (ZCL) is a widespread disease in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan - the newly independent States in Middle Asia. The main control measure against ZCL is the extermination of *Rhombomys opimus* - the principal natural reservoir of *Leishmania major*. Leishmanization (a deliberate infection at a predetermined site on the body) with *L. major* could also be used but has several limitations for mass application.

The effectiveness of pyrimethamine against ZCL was shown at the beginning of 1980. For the first time pyrimethamine was used for chemoprophylaxis in Turkmenistan. The drug was administered at 0.02-0.025 g weekly for 3 months during the *L. major* transmission season. Sixteen cases (3.3%) of ZCL were observed among 488 persons under prophylaxis and 236 cases (50.5%) in the control group of 467 people (1).

We have obtained similar results in 1989 in a mesoendemic focus of ZCL in the Karshi steppe in Uzbekistan. Pyrimethamine prophylaxis for ZCL was used in groups of students who had arrived in the endemic area for seasonal agricultural work. Chemoprophylaxis was used as a planned control measure and therefore we could not establish a proper placebo group. Persons who had refused to take pyrimethamine for chemoprophylaxis served as controls.

The total number of persons under observation was 1358. Among them, 1250 were under chemoprophylaxis and 108 refused to take the drug. There were two groups among those who used chemoprophylaxis:

- those who received medicine under supervision of medical personnel;
- those who used the drug on their own.

The data are presented in Table 1.

We observed an almost fortyfold decrease in ZCL morbidity among persons taking pyrimethamine for chemoprophylaxis. At present pyrimethamine chemoprophylaxis is the recommended regimen for populations in ZCL foci, especially temporary residents in these areas (2).

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TABLE 1. RESULTS OF PYRIMETHAMINE CHEMOPROPHYLAXIS IN UZBEKISTAN, 1989

Group	Number of persons	Number of persons who contracted ZCL	%
Persons receiving chemoprophylaxis under medical supervision	625	2	0.32 ± 0.2
Persons taking the drug on their own	625	4	0.64 ± 0.6
Persons who refused to receive medicine	108	20	18.58 ± 3.7

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