

# CONNECTION OF POLIOMYELITIS WITH INOCULATION

The first open admission by supporters of inoculation that an attack of poliomyelitis might be associated with inoculation of diphtheria toxoid or of the combined diphtheria and whooping-cough toxoid was made in articles appearing in *The Lancet*, April 8th, 1950, and *The Medical Officer* for the same date.

*The Lancet* published a report from Dr. Bertram P. MacCloskey, M.B. (Melb.) Poliomyelitis Officer, State Health Department, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on THE RELATION OF PROPHYLACTIC INOCULATION TO THE ONSET OF POLIOMYELITIS.

Dr. MacCloskey found on investigating 340 cases of poliomyelitis that 31 of them had received a prophylactic injection of one kind or another within three months of the onset of poliomyelitis.

The Editor of *The Lancet* commented: "The significant finding is that there was clearly an association between the site of the last injection and the size and degree of the subsequent paralysis. This was particularly well marked in the children who had received pertussis vaccine, either alone or in combination, but it existed for diphtheria toxoid also . . . here, whatever the patient's age, the injections into the arm were clearly associated with an increased frequency and clinical severity of upper-limb paralysis."

Ten of Dr. MacCloskey's cases had received diphtheria toxoid alone.

Dr. MacCloskey also gave details of paralysis developing more than three months after inoculation. Of those inoculated from three to twelve months before poliomyelitis developed, ten had had diphtheria toxoid alone; of those attacked more than a year after the inoculation 61 had had diphtheria toxoid alone.

The paper in *The Medical Officer* for April 8, 1950, was by Dr. Dennis H. Geffen, M.D., D.P.H., Medical Officer of Health for the London Borough of St. Pancras. It was entitled "The Incidence of Paralysis Occurring in London Children Within Four Weeks after Immunization."

In this paper Dr. Geffen told his audience (London medical officers of health) that Dr. J. K. Martin had been collecting a series of cases of paralysis following immunization over a period of many years, and that Dr. Gale of the Ministry of Health had analysed sixty-five cases, and concluded that the time relation (usually about 14 days between the injection and paralysis) suggested a *prima facie* case for investigation.

Dr. Geffen started his investigation when a colleague in the public health service, Dr. Susan Tracy, notified two cases of poliomyelitis in the second week of September 1949, occurring in children aged ten months, in each of which it was subsequently found that there had been inoculation within the preceding two to three weeks.

Dr. Geffen made investigations and found that six children in the borough had contracted poliomyelitis within twenty-two days of immunization. Telephone calls from some of his colleagues showed that similar instances were occurring elsewhere.

Out of 182 cases of poliomyelitis in London under five years of age since the beginning of 1949, 32 children had developed the disease within four weeks of receiving injections, the paralysis affecting in particular the limb receiving the injection. In eight of these cases an anti-diphtheria toxoid had been used.

Dr. Geffen came across other cases of paralysis following inoculation performed between four weeks and 2 to 3 months after immunization, but did not include them in his series as the paralysis did not develop in the inoculated limb.

Chapman Pincher in *The Daily Express*, April 10, 1950, said that Dr. John R. Martin of Guy's Hospital had found more than eighty cases of children who developed infantile paralysis soon after they had been given injections.

Professor A. Bradford Hill, D.Sc., Ph.D., and Dr. J. Knowelden, M.D., D.P.H., were asked by the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health to make investigations. After looking at the records of 410 sufferers from poliomyelitis under five years of age in 33 administrative areas, they came to the conclusion that "cases of paralysis were occurring which were associated with inoculation procedures carried out within the month preceding the recorded date of onset of illness." They found little support for the belief that the whooping-cough vaccine and the combined antigens are more prone to cause paralysis (or be followed by paralysis) than A.P.T.

In June 1950 the Minister of Health sent a circular to Medical Officers of Health in England and Wales reminding them of a letter sent to them by Dr. Bradley early in May on the subject of poliomyelitis and inoculation. The Chief Medical Officer stated in this circular that he had received further information which suggested that, although combined diphtheria-pertussis antigens may, in this country, have been more liable to cause trouble than others, diphtheria antigens alone have also been involved in a number of cases. He continued:

"I suggest, therefore, that in any locality in which poliomyelitis is becoming exceptionally prevalent it would be prudent to suspend, for the time being, the use of diphtheria antigens as well as those containing pertussis vaccine."

In June 1951, the New York City's Department of Health suspended diphtheria and whooping cough inoculations (except for infants under 6 months said to be virtually immune to polio) at its 76 child health stations. The ban ran until October 1st 1951.

In the Report of the Medical Research Council for 1948-50, one of the matters dealt with was paralysis after inoculation. The Council concluded that inoculation within the month preceding the onset of poliomyelitis in some of the cases which occurred in 1949 had caused the paralysis to be localised in the injected limb, and appeared sometimes to have contributed to the development of paralysis in children who would otherwise have remained in the group of latent infections.

Dr. R. E. Hope Simpson in a letter in *The Lancet*, 19/5/51 described four cases of poliomyelitis encountered by him in 1947 (after tonsillectomy or some kind of injury to the thumb or hand) and added details of an old case of poliomyelitis he encountered at the same time. This was a little girl aged 9 years found to have paralysis of the left arm. The paralysis had occurred about a fortnight after an injection of A.P.T. on November 2, 1943.

The Ministry of Health is still advising that during epidemics of poliomyelitis all inoculation should be suspended in the area.

The World Health Organization held a conference in Rome in September 1953 at which the question of poliomyelitis following inoculations was discussed. Whilst the experts who met there would not admit that there is danger of paralysis being activated by inoculation, they did say that during epidemics of poliomyelitis, inoculations should be stopped.

Dr. Grant of Gateshead thinks immunization should be stopped temporarily directly a case of poliomyelitis appears in a district.

In an appendix to the Report of the London County Council Medical Officer of Health for the year 1952, the 1949 epidemic of poliomyelitis was analysed in its relationship to previous inoculation.

The conclusion was drawn that, in the conditions pertaining to 1949, and over the whole year there was an increased risk of poliomyelitis following inoculations. With the combined diphtheria and whooping-cough vaccine this was nearly four times the normal risk in the three months following inoculation; with injections with A.P.T. (alum precipitated toxoid against diphtheria) a smaller increase in risk was involved. Smaller, yes, but a definite increase in risk.

# THE ARCHIVE COLLECTION

THIS LITERATURE WAS COLLECTED  
FROM VARIOUS SOURCES  
OVER THE YEARS OF MY RESEARCH  
ON VACCINATION  
WHICH STARTED IN SEPTEMBER 1991.

FORTUNATELY I RECEIVED  
SEVERAL DOCUMENTS  
AND BOOKS FROM INDIVIDUALS  
WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN  
THE ANTI-VACCINATION LEAGUE OF GREAT BRITAIN  
DURING THEIR LIFE TIME.

THE LATE DR GORDON LATTO, WHO SERVED AS THE MEDICAL  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE DURING THE MID 1900s.  
ALSO, IAN & MONIQUE STIRLING TO NAME A FEW.

ALSO THANKS TO JOHN WANTLING, AN INDEPENDENT  
RESEARCHER, FOR PATIENTLY PHOTOCOPYING  
NUMEROUS ARCHIVE PUBLICATIONS & FORWARDING  
COPIES TO ME BACK IN THE MID-NINETIES.

I HAVE SCANNED THESE PUBLICATIONS & LITERATURE  
TO PRESERVE THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION  
CONTAINED WITHIN THESE DOCUMENTS  
IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE CIRCULATED  
& MADE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO WISHES  
TO STUDY THE HISTORICAL DATA  
SURROUNDING THIS SUBJECT.

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• 2017 •