Dynamic Chiropractic

Polio Vaccine Used in '50s in Africa to Be Tested for AIDS Contamination

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More than 40 years after they were originally produced, samples of an experimental oral polio vaccine used to immunize hundreds of thousands of people in central Africa in the 1950s will be tested to see if they carry the virus that causes AIDS. The announcement was made in February by representatives of the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, in response to growing allegations that a tainted version of the vaccine may have been responsible for the introduction of a then-unknown simian virus into the human population, leading to the current AIDS epidemic which has killed approximately 16 million people worldwide.[1]

Professor Clayton Buck, the chief administrative officer of Wistar, said that nine vaccine phials dating from the time of the vaccine's inception have been found in the institute's freezers. Only one phial is known to have been used in the trial, which may have included as many as one million people in parts of Burundi, Rwanda and the Belgian Congo in late 1958 and 1959.

All nine samples will be tested by three separate AIDS laboratories for both human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), which commonly infects wild chimps. The names of the labs and scientists involved are being kept confidential, even among the participants themselves, in the hope that an objective analysis will be conducted.

The labs will also conduct tests to see if the animal tissue used to make the polio vaccine came from chimpanzees or another species of monkey. Hilary Koprowski and Stanley Plotkin, the two Wistar scientists involved in developing the vaccine, have maintained that only tissues from rhesus macaque monkeys were used. Rhesus macaques are indigenous to Asia and are not naturally infected with SIV.

Others who attended the trials in Africa, however, assert that chimpanzee kidney tissues were used in the making of the polio vaccine. Chimpanzee tissues are capable of supporting SIV. One theory holds that if infected chimp tissue was used in the oral polio vaccine, it may have found its way into a human host, been transmitted from person to person via sexual or blood-to-blood contact, and eventually mutated into the human immunodeficiency virus which causes AIDS.

Professor Buck expects to have results from each of the labs by May. *Dynamic Chiropractic* will report on the findings of the scientists testing the Wistar vaccine once results are available, and will keep its readers abreast of any developments regarding the oral polio vaccine and AIDS.

Latest Theory Says AIDS Virus Predates Polio Vaccine

In related news, a scientist from Los Alamos National Laboratory has developed a theory that the AIDS virus may have first infected human beings more than 20 years before the polio vaccine trials in Africa. Dr. Bette Korber, who keeps a database of HIV genetic information at Los Alamos, calculated the virus's history by looking at the rate the virus mutates over time. Assuming these genetic changes happen at a constant rate, Korber and colleagues used a supercomputer to track

the mutations back through time to a common ancestor.

Based on her findings, and allowing for errors, Korber's team concluded that the origin of the AIDS virus could range anywhere between 1910 and 1950, with a best estimate of sometime around 1930.

When asked to comment on the idea of the AIDS virus being spread via the Wistar vaccine, Korber said that her team's results "don't disprove that hypothesis, but make it unlikely."[2] To date, no blood samples have been found to support Korber's theory. The earliest known specimen of HIV was found in a blood sample taken from a man who died in 1959 in Kinsasha, the capital of the Belgian Congo and one of the first places the oral polio vaccine was tested.

References

1. Connor S. Origin of AIDS may be a 1950s batch of polio drugs. *The Independent* February 7, 2000.

2. Fox M. Computer traces AIDS origin to 1930. Reuters February 1, 2000.

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