

A-07: Toxocariasis in Sri Lanka

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A 1½ year old child admitted to hospital with an attack of wheezy bronchitis was found to have a massive enlargement of the liver and a persistently high leucocytosis ranging from $21.6 \times 10^9/L$ - $28.4 \times 10^9/L$ with 74% - 76% Eosinophils.

Live tissue from a percutaneous biopsy revealed the portal tracts widened by heavy infiltration of eosinophils, which was compatible with a diagnosis of visceral larva migrans. Stains for fungi were negative.

Serology with Gel-diffusion precipitin test using excretory and secretory antigens prepared from artificially hatched infective larvae of *Toxocara canis* gave positive results.

The child was treated with Diethylcarbamazine and Mebendazole. Two months after treatment, the liver size reduced significantly, but the white cell count still showed a marked Eosinophil leucocytosis ($42 \times 10^9/L$ with 80% Eosinophils).

A high prevalence (90% or more) of *Toxocara canis* in puppies in Sri Lanka has been reported. Transmission to humans occurs by ingestion of infected egg in soil or on contaminated hands.

The case reported here and others diagnosed previously are patients with the full blown disease of visceral larva migrans. It is probable that a large proportion of patients are not recognised clinically.

It is opportune therefore to alert pet owners and health care workers, of the public health hazards of Toxocariasis.