



ONTARIO

The Ontario Department of Health

Presents a Statement by

The Academy of Medicine, Toronto, on

"INFANTILE PARALYSIS"

(POLIOMYELITIS)

Realizing the anxiety which exists in the public mind today with respect to the increased prevalence of Poliomyelitis ("Infantile Paralysis") in Toronto and other parts of the province, the Academy of Medicine of Toronto, which represents more than one thousand physicians, called a special meeting of its Council, September 1st, to review the whole situation. To this meeting were invited representatives from all departments of medicine interested in this subject.

At the conclusion of the conference, during which time all of the pertinent facts of the present situation were presented and discussed, it was felt that, in fairness to the public, an official statement should be made to set forth the facts exactly as they exist. To this end, a committee was appointed to prepare and issue an official statement, which follows:

Poliomyelitis ("Infantile Paralysis") is a communicable disease. It is definitely known that it is caused by the entrance into the body of a minute form of life known as a virus. It is known also that this virus enters commonly through the upper part of the nasal tract. There is no evidence that the disease is conveyed by flies or domestic animals.

When an outbreak of the disease occurs, healthy persons as well as those ill with the disease are found to harbour the virus in the secretions of the nose and throat. The disease is, therefore, spread through the contact of persons one with another.

Usually the virus occasions only a mild illness but sometimes the virus enters the central nervous system, which may result in paralysis. The majority of adults are not susceptible to the disease.

Present Situation

While the number of cases reported in Toronto is greater than in any previous outbreak of this disease, and there is no reason to presume that the incidence rate is likely to decline within the next two or three weeks, it must be borne in mind that not 25% of these cases show any evidence whatever of paralysis. Furthermore, among those developing paralysis, the majority eventually will recover complete use of their paralysed limbs. It would appear, therefore, that while there is every reason for the public to view the present situation with concern, there is no justification for undue alarm or hysterical behaviour.

According to figures computed by the Department of Health, Ontario, to date, there are estimated to be 750 cases in Ontario, of which 285 have occurred in the City of Toronto. Of this number, 212 cases have been admitted to the Riverdale Isolation Hospital, only 54 of whom developed some degree of paralysis. There were 11 deaths in this group. Statistics of a similar nature apply to the Hospital for Sick Children, which has received its cases not only from Toronto but from other parts of the province.

Control Measures

These include the strict isolation of all persons ill with the disease and the quarantine of those who have been in immediate contact.

In as much as it is not known who are or are not carriers of this disease, it is advisable to reduce to a minimum, contact with other people. In other words, keep out of crowds. As children are particularly susceptible, it is most important that they be kept as far as possible from mingling with other persons. For this reason, the opening of the schools of Toronto has been deferred and the Department of Health of the Province of Ontario has recommended to parents that they see to it that their children avoid attendance at theatres, playgrounds, bathing pools and beaches and other places of amusement where children congregate. The Academy agrees with the provincial and municipal health authorities that the responsibility for the control of the activities of children is primarily the duty of the parents.

The Department of Health of Ontario has completed within its own organization plans whereby serum for the treatment of this disease is available in any part of the province upon the request of the attending physician.

Nasal Spray

Experimental work with animals indicates that Poliomyelitis can be prevented by spraying the extreme upper part of the inside of the nose with a harmless solution of zinc sulphate. This was discovered during the past year. To date, its value in the prevention of Poliomyelitis in humans is not known. To be in any degree effective, the spray must be applied high up inside the nose. This can only be done with a specially constructed atomizer and by a physician thoroughly familiar with this type of work. The application of this or any other spray by an ordinary atomizer or to the lower part of the nose is quite useless. The possible value of the nasal spray properly administered is being determined at the present time in Toronto.

The Council of the Academy of Medicine of Toronto endorses the attitude adopted by the provincial Department of Health and the local Board of Health in respect to measures designed to control the present situation. We would respectfully suggest that the general public will best serve its own interests by endeavoring to follow the advice which is being given by these health authorities.

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PRESIDENT OF
THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE
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