



From the V.P.'s. Jottings

Our first meeting of the New Year was well attended. The speaker was Dr. Michael Stubbs who gave an illustrated talk on his role as planning advisor to the National Trust. He was hosted by Andrew Fairburn.

The meeting on the 13th. January had as it's speaker Peter Lunn an orthopaedic surgeon. The chosen area of his talk was the hand. He was hosted by Rotarian Rupert Kipping.

Our speaker on 20th. January was hosted by Rotarian Eric Woodruff. The speaker was Nick Irvine who spoke on sport commentating, with particular reference to the Olympic Games and Britain's winning bid for the 2012 Olympics.

The 27th saw a a business meeting and a Frugal Lunch with the balance of our lunch payment going to our charity account. It was also proposed that we send £500.00 each to the Home Farm Trust and towards the renovation of a school in Sri Lanka. This was from the proceeds of the Christmas Concert held at St. Mary's Church.

On Friday and Saturday the 27th. and 28th January the semi finals for the Young Musician of the year competition were held at Sibford School. The final is to be held on the 4th March at Sibford School.

January has been a quiet month after the frenzy of the year end. Although a lot of preparation has been done for the coming months.

February sees the annual Club darts competition on the 6th. at the Cricket Club, the annual Quiz night on the 9th also at the Cricket club, and the Auction of Favours to be held on the 11th. February at Bloxham School.

JOKES AND QUOTES OF THE MONTH (courtesy of Janet Chapman)

'Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.' Winston Churchill

During the heat of the space race in the 1960s, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration decided it needed a ball point pen to write in the zero gravity confines of its space capsules. After considerable research and development, the Astronaut Pen was developed at a cost of about US \$1 million. The pen worked and also enjoyed some modest success as a novelty item back here on earth.

The Soviet Union, faced with the same problem, used a pencil.

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying, and that the dog walking beside him had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them.

After a while, they came to a high, white stone wall along one side of the road. It was of finest marble and stretched to the top of a long hill, where it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight.

When the man reached the arch, he stood before a magnificent gate, in the arch that shone with mother-of-pearl, and the street that led to the gate reflected pure gold. He and the dog walked toward the gate and, as he got closer, he saw another man, sitting at a desk to one side. When he was close enough, the traveller called out, "Excuse me, where are we?"

"This is Heaven, sir," the sitting man answered.

"Wow! Would you happen to have some water?" the traveller asked. "Certainly, sir; please, come right in, and I'll have some ice water brought right up."

The sitting man gestured, and the gate began to open. "Can my friend," gesturing toward his dog, "come in, too?" the traveller asked.

"I'm afraid not, sir, as we don't accept pets."

The traveller thought for a moment, turned back toward the road and continued the way he had been going with his dog. After another long walk, and at the top of another long hill, he came to a dirt road leading through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed.

There was no wall or fence or other boundary marker. As he approached the gate, the traveller saw another man inside the gate, leaning against a tree and reading a book.

"Excuse me!" the traveller called to the man. "Do you have any water?" "Yeah, sure, there's a pump over there, come on in." "How about my friend here?" the traveller gestured to the dog.

"There should be a bowl by the pump."

They went through the gate, and sure enough, there was an old-fashioned hand pump with a bowl beside it. The traveller filled the water bowl and took a long drink; then he gave some water to the dog. When they were full, the traveller and the dog walked back toward the man who was standing by the tree.

"What do you call this place?" the traveller asked.

"This is Heaven," he answered.

"Well, that's confusing," the traveller said. "The man down the road said that was Heaven, too."

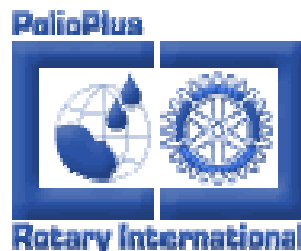
"Oh, you mean the place with the golden street and pearly gates? Nope. That's Hell."

"Doesn't it make you mad for them to use your name like that?"

"No, we're just happy that they screen out the folks who would leave their best friends behind."

Global Polio Largely Fading Stronger Vaccine Is Playing Key Role

By David Brown - Washington Post Staff Writer



The 17-year effort to eradicate polio from the world appears to be back on track after nearly unravelling in the past three years.

A new strategy of using a vaccine targeting the dominant strain of the virus appears to have eliminated polio from Egypt, one of six countries where it was freely circulating.

That approach is on the verge of doing the same in India; twenty-five years ago, India had 200,000 cases of paralytic polio a year. A decade ago, it was still seeing 75,000 cases annually. Through November 2005, it recorded 52.

Such dramatic successes, many the result of a more potent formulation of polio vaccine, have once again made eradication of the paralyzing viral disease a realistic goal. Only one human disease -- smallpox -- has ever been wiped out, and that was almost three decades ago.

Intensive immunization campaigns targeting tens of millions of children in Africa have suppressed polio transmission in countries where it reappeared after the continent's most populous nation, Nigeria, halted universal polio vaccination in 2003.

The end of 2005 had been the latest deadline for polio eradication. The initiative, started in 1988, had a polio-free world by 2005 as its goal. No new deadline has been set, and success may depend, in part, on raising \$200 million for more vaccination campaigns.

Nevertheless, the organisers and those funding the eradication initiative are more confident.

The countries that were reinfected -- they were places where we had stopped polio before, we be stopped again.

Rotary is a co-leader of the eradication campaign, to which it has contributed \$600 million and tens of thousands of volunteers.



"The risk now is Nigeria -- and losing the commitment in other countries. But we're confident now that Nigeria will get the job done," said David L. Heymann, chief of the polio eradication program at the World Health Organization, which is directing the initiative.

The new "monovalent" vaccine appears to have been close to a magic bullet in boosting immunity to polio in a half-dozen areas of extremely high population density.

"This is the big development, without a doubt," said R. Bruce Aylward, a Canadian physician and WHO's chief eradication strategist.

The effort to eliminate polio has taken longer and proved harder than the eradication of smallpox, which took 10 years and ended in 1978. One of the main reasons is that most polio infections are not apparent, while smallpox causes a dramatic rash that makes identifying victims fairly easy.

Although polio virus does its damage in the spinal cord, it infects the body through the intestine and spreads most easily in crowded populations with poor sanitation.

In only 1 in 200 infections does it cause paralysis. In other cases, it produces only fever and diarrhea, or no symptoms. Consequently, polio virus can be carried "silently" into a polio-free population and spread before it is recognized.

That is what happened when the Islamic states of northern Nigeria stopped immunizing children in 2003 because of rumors that the oral vaccine caused sterility and was part of a Western campaign against Muslims.

Between January 2003 and July 2005, 18 polio-free countries were reinfected with virus that originated in northern Nigeria.

Analysis of the poliovirus genes -- which accumulate mutations at a steady, known rate -- allowed scientists to trace the route, and even the timing, of the microbe's spread.

Work done at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by Olen M. Kew and Mark A. Pallansch showed that virus from northern Nigeria was carried into Chad and several neighboring countries in 2003.

From Chad one strain moved to Sudan in late 2003 or early 2004, and from there to Saudi Arabia. From Saudi Arabia it was carried to Indonesia, where on March 13 this year, polio was diagnosed in an infant boy in West Java -- the first Indonesian case since 1995.

Reinfection occurred because these countries had not maintained adequate immunization rates in young children.

During the same period, three other polio-free countries -- Angola, Lebanon and Nepal -- were reinfected with virus that originated in northern India.

In all these countries -- and in northern Nigeria, where politicians and clerics now support polio vaccination -- intensive immunization campaigns have resumed.

Last month, WHO experts confirmed that 10 reinfected African countries -- Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Togo -- have reported no cases since late June. That strongly suggests virus transmission has been stopped.

The trans-Africa outbreak had many arresting features -- post-9/11 suspicions of the West in Muslim regions, political jockeying in Nigeria and a humanitarian disaster in Sudan that accelerated the spread of the disease.

"What the world wasn't looking at was what was happening in Egypt and India," Aylward said recently in his office in Geneva.

Vaccination campaigns were being run every few months in those countries. They were reaching 90 to 95 percent of children younger than 5. Yet polio kept circulating.

"This was a much bigger risk than Nigeria because we had a potentially fatal flaw in the program," Aylward said.

The solution came when Aylward and his colleagues realized that -- ironically -- they would get better results with a much simpler version of the vaccine.

Top Tips from the Editor.....

There are three types of polio virus -- 1, 2 and 3 -- that differ slightly. No type 2 virus has been detected since September 1999; it appears to be eradicated. Type 3 is disappearing fast; it occurs only in Nigeria, Niger, northern India and Afghanistan.

Oral polio vaccine contains weakened strains of all three. That would not seem to be a problem -- except it turns out it is.

A dose of oral vaccine -- two drops -- contains about 1 million type 1 viruses, and about 100,000 type 2 and type 3 viruses. In the human intestine, these viruses compete with one another in producing "protective immunity" against the virus.

After one dose of oral vaccine, only about 25 percent of babies were protected against type 1 polio virus. That rises to more than 90 percent -- but only after multiple doses. In two Indian states where polio is endemic -- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar -- nearly 750,000 babies are born each month. That results in a pool of unvaccinated "susceptibles" that constantly numbers in the millions.

Studies showed, however, that giving a vaccine containing only type 1 virus to infants produced immunity in 80 percent after a single dose. Armed with that understanding, WHO found vaccine makers willing to make a monovalent type 1 vaccine, and in November 2004 it ordered 50 million doses.

In six months, the reformulated vaccine got through the process of testing, approval and licensing by regulatory agencies in France, India and Belgium, where it is made.

"No quality controls were skipped. Everybody just gave us their highest attention," said Shanelle Hall of the supply division of UNICEF, the agency that provides most of the vaccine.

Since the vaccine went into use in Egypt this spring, polio has disappeared there. UNICEF has ordered 600 million doses and plans to use it throughout much of Africa.

Next year, India may be free of polio. One former hotbed -- Bombay -- already is.

Since April, no polio virus has been detected in that city's sewage. That is indirect evidence the virus is no longer carried by any of its 12.7 million residents -- undoubtedly for the first time in history

DON'T waste money on expensive iPods. Simply think of your favourite tune and hum it. If you want to "switch tracks", simply think of another song you like and hum that instead.

CINEMA goers. Please have consideration for pirate DVD viewers by going to the loo before the film starts.

RAPPERS Avoid having to say 'know what I'm sayin' all the time by actually speaking clearly in the first place.

RED WINE DRINKERS Worried that your teeth will be stained after a heavy night of drinking red wine? Simply drink a bottle of white wine before going to bed to remove the stains.

SOLDIERS Invest in a digital camera to avoid all that court martial tomfoolery after a trip to Trueprint.

MURDERERS Need to dispose of a body? Simply parcel it up and post it to yourself via DHL. You will never see it again.

BURGLARS When fleeing from the police, run with your right arm sticking Out at 90 degrees, wrapped in a baby mattress in case they set one of their dogs on you.

EMPLOYERS Avoid hiring unlucky people by immediately tossing half the CVs into the bin.

MEN When listening to your favourite CD, simply turn up the sound to the volume you desire; then turn it down three notches. This will save your wife from having to do it.

GAMBLERS For a new gambling opportunity, try sending £50 to yourself by Royal Mail.

BANGING two pistachio nutshells together gives the impression that a very small horse is approaching.

DRIVERS If a car breaks down or stalls in front of you, beep your horn and wave your arms frantically. This should help the car start and send them on their way.

PREVENT burglars stealing everything in the house by simply moving everything in the house into your bedroom when you go to bed. In the morning, simply move it all back again.

CAR thieves Don't be discouraged when nothing is on view. All the valuables may be hidden in the glove box or under a seat.

MOTORISTS Avoid getting prosecuted for using your phone whilst driving. Simply pop your mobile inside a large shell and the police will think you are listening to the sea.

SHOES last twice as long if only worn every other day.

SINGLE men Convince people that you have a girlfriend by standing outside Etam with several bags of shopping, looking at your watch and occasionally glancing inside.

BOIL an egg to perfection without costly egg timers by popping the egg into boiling water and driving away from your home at exactly 60 mph. After 3 miles, phone your wife and tell her to take the egg out the pan.

McDONALD'S Make your brown carrier bags green in colour so they blend in with the countryside after they've been thrown out of car windows.

Whale 'vomit' sparks cash bonanza - An Australian couple who picked up an odd-looking fatty lump from a quiet beach are in line for a cash windfall.

Leon Wright and his wife took home a 14.75kg lump of ambergris, found in the innards of sperm whales and used in perfumes after it has been vomited up.

Sought after because of its rarity, ambergris can float on the ocean for years before washing ashore.

Worth up to \$20 a gram, Mr Wright's find on a South Australian beach could net his family US\$295,000 (£165,300).

At first, Mr Wright and his wife Lorelee left the strange lump on the beach where it was found.

However, two weeks later the couple returned to Streaky Bay and found it still lying there.

Floating gold

Curious, Mrs Wright persuaded her husband to take it home.

AMBERGRIS FACTS

Found in warm water oceans around the world

Bile secreted by sperm whales as a digestion aid

Solidifies and floats on water, sometimes for years

Used in perfumes, medicines, flavourings

Banned in US under endangered species legislation

Internet investigations failed to resolve the mysterious matter of the lump's identity, so the couple turned to local marine ecologist Ken Jury for help.

"I immediately decided it was ambergris - it couldn't be anything else," Mr Jury told Australia's ABC radio.

Mythologised for thousands of years, ambergris has been referred to as "floating gold" by scientists and scavengers who long for a windfall amid the surf.

Expelled from the abdomen of the giant sperm whale, often while hundreds of kilometres away from land, ambergris is a natural excrement thought to be used by the whale as a digestion aid.

The hard beaks of giant squid, a main source of food for the whale, have often been found inside lumps of ambergris.

Initially, ambergris is a soft, foul-smelling waste matter that floats on the ocean.

But years of exposure to the sun and the salt water of the ocean transform the waste into a smooth, exotic lump of compact rock that boasts a waxy feel and a sweet, alluring smell.

"It's quite remarkable when you think about it, because when the whale throws this out, it's discarded material that they can't digest," Mr Jury explained.

But after 10 years, it's considered clean and all you're getting then is the wonderful musky, very sweet perfume, which I've got to say is ultra smooth - it's unbelievable."