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TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS - SUB-COMMITTEE A

ANCYLOSTOMIASIS

INVESTIGATION OF HOOKWORM DISEASE IN ATTOCK DISTRICT

by

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Attock district is divided into four tehsils. Tehsil Attock occupies the whole of northern end, Tehsil Tallagang is a square block on the southern end, Tehsil Pindigheb to the west and Tehsil Fatehjang to the east divide the central portion of the district. Tehsil Attock is divided off from the rest of the district by the Kala Chitta hills and includes all the country between that range and the hills of Hazara. To the north-west lies the Chhachh plain with Hazro as its centre, and is the most fertile and richest portion of the district. This was the area under investigation. On the north-west it is bounded by Indus and on the east by the Gandgarh hills running almost due south from Hazara. On the south it is shut in by a steep slope, the edge a bank of pure sand which runs across the western half of the tehsil from east to west. A study of the ancient records shows that the Chhachh plain was once upon a time a vast lake. This is also evident from the word Chhachh which is said to mean a marsh.

As has been already mentioned above, this is probably the only fertile area of the district where the level of sub-soil water is very high and the main crops are tobacco and maize. Hazro and its surrounding villages are very famous for producing the best quality of tobacco and "Naswar" and nowadays the Virginia tobacco is also under cultivation and fetches considerable amounts of money. Hazro proper which is the headquarters of the tehsil, is highly populated and very congested. The sanitary habits of the people are most primitive. The women-folk observe strict purdah and defecate either in their houses on heaps of manure collected from the animals, or they go and ease themselves in their own fields.

Since manure is very costly in that part of the area, they do not waste it whether it is human manure or animal. The raw manure is taken into fields which is said to help in cultivation of tobacco. It will, therefore, be evident that sanitary conditions of the people and the method of collection, removal and disposal of night soil are extremely favourable for the prevalence of hookworm disease. During my stay in the area, I took random samples of the population both at Hazro and at a neighbouring village named Shahdher and at both the places the incidence of hookworm infestation amongst the people of all ages was between 60-70%. There are about seventeen or eighteen villages in the area which exhibit similar conditions and the problem is such that needs immediate attention of the department.

### CONTROL MEASURES

The control measures may be divided under two headings: Preventive and Curative.

#### 1. Preventive Measures

Preventive measures comprise health education and providing of public latrines. Both these measures although ideal will not be found effective in that area and will not bring quick relief to the population. In the first instance, the people are illiterate (the literacy standard is extremely low - 10%), and secondly they observe strict purdah and I was told by the people that even if bore-hole latrines were provided they will not be used.

#### 2. Curative Measures

Curative measures comprise giving anti-helminth drugs to infested people. It is a feasible problem and it is recommended that the following staff may be deputed to district who should work under the direction of the District Health Officer:

One A.M.O.; one dispenser; one peon and one sweeper.

This party will carry out systematic survey of the village and will also dispense medicine.