Onchocerciasis in Guatemala

Preliminary Report

by

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In Guatemala in certain areas on the Pacific slope of the volcanic ranges, one encounters with great frequency, a subcutaneous tumor or fibrous nodule, usually situated upon the head, and of parasitic origin. Attention was particularly attracted to this condition by Robles in 1915, and in 1919 he published an account of the condition and showed that it was caused by a species of filaria. He also emphasized that the fibromatous nodules upon the scalp were often associated with disturbances of the eyes, particularly of vision, and that these disturbances disappeared following removal of the tumors. In addition, he also believed that the parasite produced a definite type of erysipelas which was termed Erisipela de la Costa. Subsequently Luna, Calderon, Azurdia, and others confirmed these investigations of Robles and the favorable results obtained by the removal of the tumors and the relief thereby of the eye symptoms.

Brumpt, who studied pathological material furnished by Robles, described the filaria found in the tumors as a new species. While it is almost identical with the species Onchocerca volvulus found in subcutaneous fibromata in Africa, Brumpt reported that it differed especially in the size and distribution of the papillae in the male parasite, and by the great size of the spicules. Also, on account of the differences in location in general of the tumors in patients in Africa and Guatemalas, he separated it as a new species, calling it