

HEINZ-BODY ANEMIA IN DDS TREATMENT

It appears that the mainstay of leprosy therapy, diaminodiphenyl sulfone (DDS to most of us, officially dapsone in Britain), has in recent years proved to be of much value in the treatment of dermatitis herpetiformis. In order to suppress the symptoms it often has to be given in rather large dosage, sometimes as much as 200 mgm. daily, and consequently anemia is a constant hazard.

⁷ NASSAU, E and HAMILTON, G. M. Atypical mycobacteria in human pulmonary disease. *Tubercle* **38** (1957) 387-396.

⁸ EDWARDS, L. B. and PALMER, C. E. Epidemiologic studies of tuberculin sensitivity. I. Preliminary results with purified protein derivatives prepared from atypical acid-fast organisms. *American J. Hyg.* **68** (1958) 213-231.

This is pointed out in a recent article by Smith and Alexander.¹ Because the anemia is sometimes severe, early recognition of the onset of this state is important, they point out, and they hold that the search for Heinz bodies is a most useful test for early detection of the condition. These bodies, not mentioned in current text-books on clinical pathology available (but, historically, in medical dictionaries) are described as small refractile granules found in the red blood cells in many cases of hemolytic anemia due to drugs. They usually cannot be seen in routinely-stained blood films, but are readily demonstrated by a simple supravital technique, which is described in an abstract in this issue. Smith and Alexander give notes on three cases of dermatitis herpetiformis with hemolytic anemia resulting from DDS treatment in which significant numbers of the Heinz body were found (in 50%, 40%, and 25% of the erythrocytes, respectively), and a fourth case without anemia in which they were present in smaller numbers (8% of the erythrocytes).

So far as we are aware there has been no report in the leprosy literature of the observation of Heinz bodies in the blood of patients treated with the sulfones. It is possible that the dermatologists are one up on the leprologists in this matter. Whether or not detection of these bodies in leprosy cases under treatment would be of any practical value will not be known until the search for them is made.

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¹SMITH, R. S. and ALEXANDER, S. Heinz-body anaemia due to dapsone. *British Med. J.* **1** (1959) 625-627 (abstract in this issue).