



Of Mice & Men & Malaria

It's summer; time to get away and vent my frustrations of being a pharmacist. It's also time to end a self-imposed seven-month spell of teetotalism. A challenge I was always going to overcome. It is not the late Mr Jack Daniels who is in charge; it is I. Going away is always good but the ills that are endemic in some of the shores we land on worry me.

Malaria, typhoid fever, bilhaziasis, yellow fever, hepatitis, HIV, the bugs are waiting. Have you had your vaccinations? Do you have prophylaxis medication? My wife and I might have a bit of natural immunity against some of the bugs but I fear most for the children.

*My babies, my pride, The bugs think you're prey
 Sweet juicy blood from Yorkshire, Shall we fly
 Mosquitoes are sharpening their proboscis
 Ready to sting*

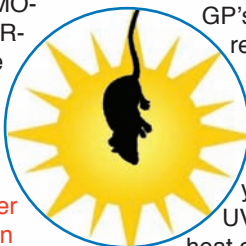
*Flies are buzzing, rubbing their front legs in glee
 Ready to land, I think I'm going to cry*

But then the brethren of mice I used in my dissertation SCHISTOSOMO-SALMONELLOSIS: THE PHARMACOTHERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS could be whispering that the chickens are coming home to roost.

And I say to them - *Please forgive me for I was young and adventurous. I was eager to attain the deeper knowledge of the effects of drugs on humans and the effects of human bodies on drugs. In your particular case we had to add to the body of evidence to discover why people suffering from bilharziasis (schistomiasis) were likely to suffer a relapse of typhoid fever after an otherwise successful initial treatment with antibiotics.*

At the time (20 years ago) animal rights were not as well publicised as they are now- certainly not in Africa- otherwise I'd have selected a different topic to study. So it never crossed my mind then. I don't ever recall my research supervisor, Prof Nyazema, discussing the issue with me.

I was preoccupied with the probity of my experimental design and overcoming my own fear of mice as I tagged at their tails to inject them with microbes and drugs.



To the mice I inoculated with the salmonella typhi bug-
The mice I infected with bilhaziasis eggs
The mice I infected with both bugs
The mice I treated for typhoid
The mice I treated for bilhaziasis
The mice I treated for both infections
The mice I did not treat at all
I say please accept my heartfelt apology.



We did prove that bilhaziasis had something to do with the persistence of typhoid fever possibly through the typhoid bug hiding in the bilhazia (schistosom) worms located in the host's liver. It was not all in vain but I admit it was at your brethren's peril.

So I have first-hand knowledge of how much damage some of these bugs can cause. Choose your food sources carefully. Any diarrhoea contracted outside Europe is best brought to your GP's care. Continue Malaria prophylaxis after return as prescribed because the malaria bug persists in your blood at different stages of its cycle for weeks after the sting.

And remember; sunscreens can protect you from short and long term damage by UV light A and B but not against the sheer heat of infrared from the sun. It's like putting a sunscreen lotion on and expecting it to protect you against the heat of a fire.

It's just not going to happen. It's not asbestos. Folks, unless you have a skin with a permanent natural sunscreen like mine, the best way is to cover up and avoid excessive exposure to direct sunlight, or the heat of it.

Yours Medicinally, Abel Kubare,
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