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Short Report

Absence of relationship between human immunodeficiency virus 1 and sleeping sickness

F. NOIREAU, F. BRUN-VEZINET, B. LAROUZE, M. Y. NZOUKQUDI AND J. P. GOUTEUX
Laboratoire d'Entomologie Médicale et Parasitologie, Centre ORSTOM, Brazzaville, People's Republic of The Congo; Laboratoire de Virologie, Hôpital Claude Bernard, 75019 Paris, France; INSERM U131 Institut de Médecine et d'Epidémiologie Tropicales, Hôpital Claude Bernard, 75019 Paris, France

The possible role of certain blood-sucking insects in the transmission of human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV1) in endemic regions has been discussed by various authors (ZUCKERMAN, 1986; BECKER *et al.*, 1986). Since immunosuppression is associated with trypanosomiasis, it is possible that this disease may trigger acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in HIV1 carriers (Taelman *et al.*, 1983). Recently, HIV1 proviral DNA was found in the genome of tsetse flies from Central Africa, and the possibility of tsetse flies being a natural reservoir for the virus has been suggested (BECKER *et al.*, 1986).

In order to test this hypothesis, we collected sera from 138 trypanosomiasis patients from the Bouenza focus in the Congo (average age: 28.9 ± 16.1 years; male:female ratio: 1.17). The 310 controls were subjects living in the Lekoumou region (average age: 37.7 ± 16.5 years; male:female ratio: 1.57). This area is free of sleeping sickness, and the density of tsetse flies is low. All sera were tested for antibodies to HIV1 (anti-HIV1) by ELISA (Elavia kit, Diagnostic Pas-

teur) and the positive results confirmed by Western blot (WB) (LAV-Blot, Diagnostic Pasteur). The results are shown in the Table.

Table—Results of serological tests for anti-HIV1 antibodies in trypanosomiasis patients and controls

	n	ELISA(+)	%	WB(+)	%
Trypanosomias patients	138	6	4.3	4	2.9
Controls	310	20	6.5	7	2.3

The 11 anti-HIV1 positive subjects were healthy. The prevalence rates of WB-confirmed anti-HIV1 are comparable in both groups. These results do not support the hypothesis that tsetse flies may be a reservoir for the virus or vectors in zones which are endemic for both trypanosomiasis and HIV1.

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