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WHO INTER-REGIONAL COURSE ON METHODS OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE IN KARLOVY VARY (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

Between 12—31 August 1968 the World Health Organization held an Inter-Regional Course on Methods of Epidemiological Surveillance in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, with participation of prominent scientists and responsible officers of the WHO Regional Offices, as well as medical workers of key countries for WHO programmes (Ghana, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Iran, East Pakistan, UAR, Netherlands, Hungary, India, Ceylon, Japan). The Organizing Secretary was Docent Dr. K. Žáček.

The Course was opened by Dr. Karel Raška, Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, WHO, Geneva, with an important paper on the concept of epidemiological surveillance of communicable diseases. Dr. Raška defined epidemiological surveillance as follows: "Surveillance means the epidemiological study of a disease as a dynamic process involving the ecology of the infectious agent, the host, the reservoirs and the vectors, as well as the complex mechanisms concerned in the spread of infection and the extent to which this spread occurs. Surveillance provides a scientific basis for public health decisions on control programmes, their evaluation and for epidemiological forecasts." — "The aim of surveillance is to follow up specific diseases in terms of morbidity and mortality in time and place and to follow the spread of infection in the human population (i.e. circulation of the etiological agent, immune response) and, in certain diseases, such as salmonellosis, plague, tularemia, brucellosis, Q fever, arbovirus infections, toxoplasmosis etc., among the animal population also. Diagnosis, and especially tracing the spread of infection, may involve a variety of laboratory procedures."

Dr. Erik Roelsgaard, Chief Medical Officer, Epidemiological Surveillance Unit, WHO, Geneva, dealt with elements of epidemiological surveillance and their implementation under different conditions, which, according to the report of the Technical Discussions at the Twenty-first World Health Assembly, are as follows:

1. Mortality registration; 2. Morbidity reporting; 3. Epidemic reporting; 4. Laboratory investigation; 5. Individual case investigation; 6. Epidemic field investigation; 7. Epidemiological surveys; 8. Animal reservoir and vector distribution; 9. Biologics and drug utilization; 10. Demographic and environmental data.

The whole programme of the Course was divided into several main groups. Apart from the virological and bacteriological topics of greatest interest to parasitologists were papers and discussion on the following themes: WHO Serum Reference Banks and their activities; Planning of immunological surveys (Dr. K. Žáček, WHO Serum Reference Bank, Prague, Dr. A. Geser, WHO, Kenya, Dr. V. Šerý, WHO, Afghanistan); Implementation of the programme in a developing country, especially with regard to the collection of blood from human and animal sources (Dr. J. Vobecký, Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, Prague); Role of immunological surveys in the beginning and stimulation of the implementation of epidemiological surveillance especially in developing countries (Dr. E. Roelsgaard, WHO/HQ); The use of computers in data processing from immunological surveys (Mr. J. Jelínek, Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, Prague); Surveillance of some vectors important in the spread of infections (Mr. J. Wright, WHO/HQ); National surveillance of vectors and reservoir animals (Dr. B. Rosický, Institute of Parasitology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague); Surveillance of plague (Dr. B. Cvjetanović and Dr. T. Kereselidze, WHO/HQ); Surveillance of louse-borne typhus (Dr. J. Červenka, Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, Bratislava, Dr. R. Brezina, Institute of Virology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava); Surveillance of tularemia (Dr. R. Benda, Military Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, Prague); Surveillance of mosquito-borne haemorrhagic fever and vector populations (Dr. E. Roelsgaard and Mr. J. Wright, WHO/HQ); Surveillance of yellow fever (Dr. Ch. Cockburn, WHO/HQ); Surveillance of tick-borne encephalitis (Dr. D. Blaškovič, Institute of Virology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava); Surveillance of reservoir animals and ticks in arbovirus infections (Dr. B. Rosický, Institute of Parasitology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague, Mr. J. Wright, WHO/HQ); International reports on virus diseases diagnosed by laboratory methods (Dr. Ch. Cockburn, WHO/HQ); Surveillance of malaria in the global programme of malaria eradication (Dr. G. Gramiccia, WHO/HQ).

The papers contained many new aspects and numerous further suggestions for epidemiological surveillance at national and global level. It should be only regretted that due to the events in August which took place in Czechoslovakia following the entrance of the Warsaw Pact troops into this country and resulting in transport difficulties, this important Course could not be completed according to schedule and had to be interrupted in its second week.

However, even the incomplete Course showed that epidemiological surveillance is a pre-requisite to modern control and prevention of communicable diseases and should be applied in all countries of the world.

Prof. Dr. B. Rosický, D.Sc.