The growing popularity of uncooked or raw seafood in Brazil has resulted in the proliferation of certain human parasitic infections. Diphyllobothriasis, an infection of the small intestine by the broad tapeworm *Diphyllobothrium* sp., is an icteric zoonosis acquired by humans and other mammals (e.g. bears, foxes or dogs) through ingestion of raw, undercooked or smoked fish (Essex & Magath 1931). This worm is the longest human parasite known (10 m-long or more) and may live for up to 25 years in the host (Leiper 1936). There are often no clinical symptoms associated with infection, apart from eosinophilia. However, in a proportion of cases there is abdominal pain, weight loss, anorexia, nausea, vertigo, and vomiting. Anemia due to B-12 deficiency has been described in cases of prolonged infection (Osorio et al. 1974, Vuylsteke et al. 2004).

This infection is common in regions with cold water lakes, such as Europe (Dupoy-Camet & Peduzzi 2004), Asia (Lee et al. 2001), and North America (Hanlon et al. 1982). In South America, the infection is common in Chile and Peru (Reinhard & Urban 2003) and there have been sporadic reports in Argentina (Semenas & Ubeda 1997, Semenas et al. 2001), none Brazilian cases of diphyllobothriasis have been published in scientific literature. This infection is not autochthonous in Brazil.

Case report - A 29-years-old woman living in Salvador (state of Bahia, Northeast region of Brazil) presented to out-patient clinic on September 2004 with complaints of gastrointestinal discomfort, including several days of abdominal pain, diarrhea, colic, and nausea. No vomiting or fever was reported. Her clinical history revealed that she had eaten raw fish (sushi) with her family some days before. The following laboratory tests were performed:
First confirmed case of *D. latum* in Brazil • FLN Santos, LB de Faro

There is a large number of possible drugs available to treat this disease, and the two main ones used are niclosamide and praziquantel, both of which are highly effective. A single dose of praziquantel (600 mg) was given, and was found to be adequate for curing the patient. The control cure of this infection is absence of eggs in the feces one month after treatment.

Perhaps the infection rate of *D. latum* in humans will increase with the increasing consumption of raw (sushi, sashimi) and smoked ictic meat, with subsequent negative economic and health impacts on the Brazilian population. However, a combination of improved sanitary surveillance of imported fish (salmon and others) and increased emphasis on sanitary practices in restaurants appears to be the best strategy for controlling and impeding the installation of this helminth in Brazil. Other effective control measures include cooking fish properly and freezing the fish below 20°C for a minimum of 7 days or below 35°C for 15 h before ingestion.

REFERENCES


Leiper RT 1936. Some experiments and observations on the longevity of *Diphyllobothrium* infections. *J Helminthol* 14: 127-130.


