A CLINICAL STUDY OF 100 PATIENTS WITH POLIOMYELITIS*

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Poliomyelitis (polio hereafter) is one of the most crippling diseases and is unfortunately still prevalent in India. We have analysed 100 cases of poliomyelitis, who reported to us from 1963 to 1969. This was the first visit to any hospital, and no physiotherapy had been given earlier.

Observations

1. Age. The age of the patients ranged from 6 months to 20 years at the time of presentation; the maximum number of 71 was seen between 6 months and 4 years. 19 children presented at 1½—2 years and 15 at 2½—3 years. After the age of 8 years, only an occasional case was seen.

2. Age of onset of polio. The peak incidence of onset was at 9—12 months (17 cases), followed by 1½—2 years (12 cases), 1½—1½ years (10 cases), 2—2½ years (9 cases) and 2½—3 years (9 cases). Only 11 cases had the disease after the age of 12 years. Interestingly, six patients developed paralysis between 0-6 months. (Fig. 1). 3. Period lapsed after onset of polio at the time of presentation. 79 out of 100 patients were seen after one month of onset. 49 reported within the period 1—12 months, 46 being in the 1-8 month range. Seven cases reported after 10 years of onset and one case after as long as 14 years.

4. Sex. The male to female ratio was 67 : 33, or 2 : 1.

5. Fever. Eighty-three patients gave a history of fever at the time of onset, in the majority of cases lasting for 1-7 days. 34 children had fever for 2-4 days only before paralysis set in. The range, when recorded, was 99°-102°F.

6. Day of onset of paralysis. In the majority of patients the paralysis set in within 1-8 days of the fever. The incidence of paralysis daywise was 2nd day (13 cases), 3rd day (12 cases), 4th day (13 cases) and 5th day (11 cases). 49 patients developed muscle weakness within 5 days of the onset of fever. (Fig. 2.).

7. Other symptoms. Four patients had a history of convulsions, one of loss of speech, two of urinary retention and one of frequency of micturition. These neurological features had all improved gradually. Three patients complained of constipation for a few days. Two children had a ‘cold’ prior to the onset and one a history of cough for a few days.

8. Distribution of the disease area-wise. One limb only was involved in 43 cases, this being the left lower limb.
Fig. 1. Age of onset.

Fig. 2. Day of onset of paralysis after fever.