

# Letters to the Editor

## Announcement of the Sina Trauma Data Bank (STDB)

Sir

Injuries are the most common cause of death among people 1 to 34 years of age, a leading cause of disability and years of life lost, and a major contributor to health care costs [1,2]. Injuries occur in all regions and countries. The magnitude of the problem however varies considerably by age, sex, region and income group [3].

In recent years, there has been a steady increase in occurrence of injury and injury-related mortality in the Islamic Republic of Iran [4]. Road traffic accidents and falling are the main causes of injury in the country [5,6]. Road traffic accidents are also the most common injury-related mortality followed by burns and drowning [4,7]. Disasters such as earthquake are other events that can cause injury and result in high casualties and losses [8]. The presence of land-mines in the Iranian borders with Iraq and Afghanistan is other important source of injury and death [9].

The amount of research in the field of trauma has been growing in the country. The results of such research are mainly published in Iranian journals not indexed in the Medline and thus are not readily available to other researchers with similar

interests. Recognizing this deficiency, we at Sina Trauma and Surgery Research Center (STSRC), the first and leading trauma research centre in the country, have developed a database of published abstracts as a step towards addressing this shortcoming. Although the database mainly includes trauma research in the Islamic Republic of Iran, it can be of benefit for other researchers with similar interests. English abstracts of more than 800 articles from 99 Iranian medical journals, most since 2000, in the field of trauma have been made available for free at [http://www.sinatrc.ac.ir/\\_databank/](http://www.sinatrc.ac.ir/_databank/). The inclusion criteria for these abstracts relate to of trauma or injury as defined by Baker et al. [10] Although the quality of the papers is variable and there may be some shortcomings in the English translation, we believe that they are worth including in the database. We hope that standards will improve with time. Article searching is provided through a variety of terms including title, abstract, author(s), journal name, keyword(s), ISSN, publication type and language. It is possible to search for single or multiple items within any specific category.

Questions about the STDB or submission of papers to be included can be addressed to [stdb@sinatrc.ac.ir](mailto:stdb@sinatrc.ac.ir).

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### **Efficacy of paromomycin and gentamicin patches in the treatment of cutaneous leishmaniasis**

Sir

In spite of many different treatments used for cutaneous leishmaniasis [1-10], there is no single effective drug treatment. In 2001-02 we studied the effect of topical paromomycin and gentamicin applied to leishmanial lesions using adhesive patches at the Leishmaniasis Research Centre of Sedigheh Hospital in Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran.

Eligible patients ( $n = 100$ ) were all those attending the centre with smear-confirmed leishmaniasis for up to 4 months. The diam-

eter of lesions was less than 5 cm and the lesions were at least 3 cm away from the eyes. Exclusion criteria were pregnancy, nursing, history of previous treatment and history of allergy to aminoglycosides.

After cleansing the lesions, plasters were applied containing 0.1% gentamicin sulfate and 10% paromomycin enclosed in a polypropylene adhesive plaster with inert characteristics (Isfahan Faculty of Pharmacy). The dressings were changed every 4 days by the researcher, and the patients were asked about their compliance.

Patients were followed clinically and parasitologically about monthly at 28, 56 and 88 days after treatment and if the patient

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Patients were followed clinically and parasitologically about monthly at 28, 56 and 88 days after treatment and if the patient

had any recurrences, another treatment was used. The maximum duration of treatment was 28 days but if the lesion was cured clinically and parasitologically, treatment was discontinued and the patient was followed up. To determine the efficacy of treatment, lesions were examined clinically and parasitologically. Complete cure of lesions was defined as return to normal texture of the lesion and epithelialization of the surface with a negative parasitological smear. Partial cure of lesions was defined as a decrease in the size and height of the lesion with or without a negative parasitological smear.

At the end of treatment, on day 28 of the study, 86 out of 100 patients (86.0%) in

the showed complete cure of lesions and 8 (8.0%) showed partial cure (Table 1).

The results of this study are very encouraging and show topical paromomycin and gentamicin sulfate therapy is effective in about 80% of the patients, with a cosmetically acceptable scar. Applying paromomycin as a plaster is likely to decrease the rate of adverse reactions, enhance penetration and is easy to apply. The main disadvantage is allergy to plasters that can be avoided by using anti-allergy plasters. It is hoped that new plasters will be developed that release the drug slowly and absorb exudates in order to improve the topical treatment of cutaneous leishmaniasis.

**Table 1 Parasitology smear results on the days 25, 58 and 88 after using paromomycin patches**

Days of treatment	No. of smear-negative patients (n = 100)	%
Day 28, full cure	86	86.0
Day 28, partial cure	8	8.0
Day 58, full cure	80	80.0
Day 88, full cure	80	80.0

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## Encouraging letters to the editor in EMHJ

Sir

Being an author in and a reader of peer-reviewed medical journals, I am always interested to express my views freely. Scientific discourse occurs in many forms: among colleagues, at scientific meetings, during peer review and after publication. Such discourse is essential to interpreting studies and guiding future research. Thus the letter section of a scientific journal is an essential part of post-publication peer review [1]. Through the letters section, scientific articles published in a peer-reviewed journal are subject to continuing scrutiny. This section is therefore a forum for scientific discourse and essential in interpreting studies and guiding future research. More-

over, it helps make a journal accountable to the medical community [2].

Because of the aforementioned and my wish to play a role in improving the quality of articles published in the journals of our Region, I made a PubMed search of 5 medical journals on the total number of publications and the proportion which were letters. PubMed is not only a simple search engine for biomedical citations, but also a powerful tool to conduct certain statistical analyses [3]. A search strategy with a one-hour limit (11 December 2005) was performed including the names of the *British medical journal*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Saudi medical journal*, *Singapore medical journal* and *Eastern Mediterranean health journal*. The search was limited to the last 5 years (01/01/2000

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to 31/12/2004) to find the total number of publications for each journal and then limited to "Letter" as a type of publication.

The proportion of letters to total number of articles published in the aforementioned journals was 33.74%, 29.76%, 7.73%, 2.93%, 0.56% respectively. The search revealed that during the last 5 years only 3 letters had been published in the *Eastern Mediterranean health journal*. Although I recognize the limitation of comparing dif-

ferent types of journals, this is clearly a small number of letters. It serves as a crude indicator of the importance of encouraging the submission of letters in the *Eastern Mediterranean health journal* in the future.

Journals should welcome letters addressed to the editor [4], especially as they are the only form of discourse that becomes part of the permanent biomedical record, linked with the scientific article through its citation in databases such as MEDLINE [1].

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