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**Study of the effect of the consumption of Leaf Concentrate from Lucerne (LLC)
by sufferers from AIDS at the St Camille Clinic in DAVOUGON,
Republic of Benin. October 2003 – January 2004**

BACKGROUND:

The St Camille Clinic takes special care, medically, psychosocially and spiritually of those who are suffering AIDS. Out of the 2,370 found and treated since 1996 about 400 are still being followed up; 150 of them at least once a month. Each month 15 – 20 are hospitalised, mostly on the occasion of an often belated diagnosis. As yet, none gets anti-retroviral drugs.

While feeding and rehydrating it is important to treat opportunist infections. In the first days, when there is often diarrhoea and the presence of buccal thrush, we give a mix of rice water and fish flour; then we introduce soya or rice porridge with sardines, at choice. Each patient receives daily 10 g of fresh spirulina, harvested on site, in a little sweetened water.

As the patients' digestion improves Lucerne Leaf Concentrate (LLC) is offered to all who are wasted or weakened, especially if they are going home, when they are urged not to hesitate to come back again.

There are also others who take LLC but whom we may not see again regularly, especially if they live far away. We haven't yet the means of taking LLC to those who can't come to the Clinic.

LLC is usually put in the sauce taken with rice or a local pasta. Child inpatients tend to have it in their porridge. Since herbal remedies are quite common in Benin that's no problem.

STUDY GROUP:

We weigh all AIDS sufferers as soon as they come into our care. The 36 in this study, including the two children, had all been through critical, life-threatening episodes, generally due to dehydration, anaemia or, often, typhoid fever.

Spending from one to four weeks as inpatients did them good but only after at least a fortnight's diet supplementation with two teaspoons a day of LLC did they begin to regain weight. It's worth noting that I had not observed similar progress until the sick were able to have LLC.

We also have nursing carriers of HIV and our first aim is to stop their diarrhoea; but the mothers tend to regard soya as causing the diarrhoea, and even more so LLC. So, probably, they would not give it for long outside the Clinic. Nonetheless, I don't rule that out as an experiment for the future.

RESULTS:

I find in most cases not only a gain in weight but also more vitality, smiles, a more normal complexion and a diminution of physical problems like thrush, infections, anaemia and oedema. We do have the antibiotic cotrimoxazole for use when necessary.

Astonishingly, in some subjects, notably those with AIDS who are receiving anti-tubercular treatment, there is a spectacular weight gain. The LLC seems to have synergic action as an appetite stimulant. The patients are well aware of this and ask for more when they run out.

In those showing no improvement or a loss of weight it is due either to HIV having caused too many complications or to poverty preventing the patient from satisfying hunger at home. That, unfortunately, is a fact.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT :

Quality of the product: It is good. In spite of our ever-present humidity the LLC keeps well in sachets.

Acceptability: Excellent: only one refusal. No distaste or reluctance developing after several weeks of consumption. However, during the difficult initial period of hospitalisation I prefer to await the disappearance of nausea so that the patient won't blame LLC for his digestive difficulties which may also be caused by the many medicines swallowed.

In sum: There is no doubt that LLC is effective in prolonging the lives of sufferers. At the outset, of course, one must detect and treat properly the opportunist infections, above all tuberculosis, the cause of many deaths. The question of early administration of LLC is one for discussion, but in all cases the confidence of the sick individual is of paramount importance.

Finally, an adequate diet for the poorest must be ensured.

In the case of sufferers who are HIV positive but not displaying symptoms it is probable that LLC greatly strengthens their natural defences. That remains to be tested in another study which would necessarily be of much longer duration, lasting until the appearance of symptoms of AIDS.

DAVOUGON, 29 JANUARY, 2004.

Fr Bernard MOEGLE,
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of the Caritas project.

Note: This study covered 36 patients (annexe 1) of whom 5 lost weight – on average 3.6 kg over 70 days; 1 remained stationary after 30 days; 30 gained weight, an average of 4.5 kg over 69 days.

Alongside these 36 patients we followed 13, who were not supplemented with LLC, for a longer period (annexe 2): 8 lost an average of 3.18 kg over 136 days; 1 remained stationary for 75 days; and 4, over an average of 127 days, gained an average of 2.12 kg.

These annexes are available on request with the individual data.