

15436 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

antibiotic resistance to the epidemic strain (phage type degraded Vi approaching A) was recognized, the change to ampicillin as standard therapy resulted in a rapid decline in mortality. (7)

The experience of the LaRaza Infectious Disease Hospital in Mexico City, the source of most of the bacteriologically confirmed cases, illustrated the magnitude and seriousness of the epidemic. In 1970, the hospital reported 179 cases of typhoid fever. In 1971, the number of cases in the hospital rose to 197. In 1972, 1,676 cases of typhoid fever were treated with 60 deaths. This is a case fatality rate of 3.6 percent. In 1973, the number of cases dropped to 681 with 13 deaths (a case fatality rate of 1.9 percent). By 1974, the number of cases had dropped to the pre-epidemic level, with 191 cases and no deaths. (8)

Although the use of ampicillin was effective in many of the cases treated in the Mexican epidemic, this fact can hardly be a cause for optimism, as noted by Anderson and Smith:

The poor response to chloramphenicol is hardly surprising, but ampicillin, to which the Mexican strain is sensitive in vitro, has proved a disappointment in general for the treatment of typhoid fever, and it would be an error to regard it as anything better than a second-line drug in this respect. (9)

In addition to the thousands of cases of chloramphenicol resistant typhoid fever reported in Mexico during the epidemic, cases due to the Mexican epidemic strain of Salmonella typhi (S. typhi) were also reported in the United States and Great Britain.