Discrete research “love” of a Nobel price winner

Nobel price award provokes usually some questions concerning a wider background related to the interests of nominated scientists. Dr William Campbell got the Noble award in the year 2015 for his studies on the control of some common tropical worms by chemotherapy. However, his true “love” was Trichinella spiralis, another nematode worm. Transmitted by pigs, wild boars and horse meat it occurred worldwide, mainly in the US, Germany, France, Poland but also in Thailand. It has a fascinating life cycle, which in the case of humans ends in some muscles cysts. Once, trichina control offered a job to thousands of microscopists looking for the parasite during an obligatory meat inspection. Nowadays more sophisticated technologies are used to find and/or to kill the parasite, which attacks humans less frequently. The worm is, however, an interesting object for scientific studies on the parasite wide biodiversity and complicated circulation in nature. The scientists, working on Trichinella, are grouped in the International Commission on Trichinellosis, which has its first conference in Poland in 1960 and remains still active. The photos show some of its members during the IVth Commission meeting in Poznan, Poland (1976) and the Vth in Noordwijk aan Zee, the Netherlands (1980). Dr William Campbell, a Commission’s president in the years 1980-1984, was participating in both.

IVth International Commission on Trichinellosis meeting in Poznan (Poland), 1976. From the left: Professors Jerzy Januszkiewicz, Bertold Kassur, Zbigniew Pawlowski, Janina Grzankowska-

Pawlowska, Martinez Fernandez, William Campbell, David Denham

One may ask a question why Trichinella infection was common in Poland and provoked its scientific community to be rather active in the international cooperation on the parasite's life and control studies. Poland was an agriculture country with traditional home-made, semi-raw products of pork. During the World Second War killing pigs privately at home was illegal due to the occupational rule and caused considerable limitations to the formal meat inspection. Uninspected pork as well as a frequently consumed wild boar's meat was the source of commonly occurring infections in this country. It was dr Campbell's drug from a benzimidazole group, which was originally used in Poland to prevent the disease, when given shortly after the ingestion of an infected meat. Dr Campbell's book "Trichinella and trichinosis", published in 1983, was a "bible" for all interested in the parasite and in the disease. In the year 1988 he also edited World Health Organization guidelines on control Trichinella infections world-wide.

Vth International Commission on Trichinellosis meeting in Noordwijk aan Zee (the Netherlands), 1980. From the left professors Zbigniew Pawlowski, Joost Ruitenberg, William Campbell and NN

Although Dr William Campbell was officially awarded for finding new effective drugs for tropical onchocercosis and filariosis he contributed also much to control trichinellosis, a rather Northern Hemisphere worm infection. He remains a well-known authority in the group co-operating in the International Commission on Trichinellosis. The Commission itself is a very good example of scientist's co-operation on the research and control of once common and sporadically deadly worm disease.

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