

Parasitology : A Fable of Wuchereria Bancrofti

By Paula Mahon, MD

While sitting at my microscope viewing a surgical slide,
I saw a filarial helminth, 100 times magnified.
This narrow fellow is often found in a dirty wet tropical zone.
It took me a long time to find him; in New England, he's wholly unknown.
The disfiguring swelling in arms, legs and scrotum produced by this parasite worm
seen in slides and the textbooks of public health students cause many a doctor to squirm.
But even the vilest of human infection may carry a benefit hidden.
Although this worm causes both pain and distention, its life has a value unbidden.
Bancrofti spends part of its parasite life competing for one flying vector, the mosquito, which carries
malaria also, and guess which one is the ejector?
Surprise! It's the worm who will beat the malaria for the infectable ride
and in this displacement of fatal disease, the worm prevents bug homicide.
In conclusion, the moral for those who may suffer a misery perpetuator
The pest may annoy you, but you never know, it may save you from problems much greater.

"The elimination of filarial worms in a co-endemic locale could enhance malarial transmission"
Aliota, MT, Chen CC, Dagoro H, Fuchs JF, Christensen BM, Dept of Pathobiological Sciences, University of
Wisconsin Madison: PLoS Neglected Tropical Disease 2011 Feb 8, 5(2)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3035669/>