

Centers for Disease Control
Atlanta GA 30333

JUN 18 1991

Henry J. Heimlich, M.D., Sc.D.
President
The Heimlich Institute
2368 Victory Parkway, Suite 410
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206

Dear Dr. Heimlich:

You have raised a number of important issues in your recent letter dealing with malariotherapy, but I think it would be most productive to remain focused on the issues directly related to malariotherapy for Lyme disease.

I share your concern for having a more effective treatment for late-stage Lyme disease. I do not agree, however, that the experience of earlier investigators who treated neurosyphilis patients with malariotherapy justifies its utilization for Lyme disease. For decades many syphilis experts concluded that the various forms of fever therapy, including malariotherapy, were ineffective. For example, in their book Syphilis and Other Venereal Diseases (Harvard University Press, 1970), Brown and co-authors concluded that all such fever therapies were "hazardous, unpredictable, and generally unsatisfactory" and that "fever therapy disappeared with the advent of penicillin."

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists recently passed a position statement on malariotherapy which concluded that "there currently is no scientific evidence to suggest that malaria is effective therapy for Lyme disease." Their position is that malariotherapy for Lyme disease or any other condition should be carried out only when the most stringent medical and scientific precautions have been taken, including approval and oversight by an institutional committee for the protection of human subjects, informed consent, approval by the Food and Drug Administration, thorough screening of donor blood for other potential bloodborne pathogens, and close monitoring within a hospital accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

The Centers for Disease Control's interest in this matter is to protect the public from unproven and potentially harmful treatments. Plasmodium vivax is not an innocuous parasite. P. vivax infection carries risks of serious illness and even death when, as in the case with malariotherapy, the infection is

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not promptly treated. Additionally, exposure to blood products carries risks of transmission of agents of other bloodborne diseases.

I respect the intensity of your feeling on this matter. However, I cannot in good conscience issue a retraction of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report article on malariotherapy of Lyme disease.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Roper', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

William L. Roper, M.D., M.P.H.
Director