

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Editor,
Medical Journal of Malaysia

Dear Sir,

Imported Cases of Chloramphenicol Resistant *Salmonella typhi*.

The Institute of Medical Research has been the national centre for phage typing of *Salmonella typhi* since 1970. The antibiotic susceptibility pattern of all the isolates are also monitored simultaneously. The first case of chloramphenicol resistant *S. typhi* was isolated in 1978 and since then, these strains have occurred sporadically. For the years 1986 to 1990, all the strains sent for phage typing were sensitive to chloramphenicol. Then in 1991, between March to July, there was an outbreak of 18 cases of chloramphenicol resistant *S. typhi* in Selangor Darul Ehsan. Although investigations carried out did not find a common source responsible for the outbreak, one of the cases was a visitor who came from southern India, whose isolate was of the same phage type and antibiogram pattern¹.

Lately, since March till now, we have received 13 strains of chloramphenicol resistant *S. typhi* from Penang (1 strain), Seremban (3 strains), Selangor (1 strain), Wilayah Persekutuan (4 strains), Ipoh (1 strain), Sungai Petani (1 strain), Kota Bharu (1 strain) and Johor Bahru (1 strain). Seven of the strains were from patients who had visited India within the last 2 to 3 weeks before the onset of the fever. Two cases are tourists from India and Pakistan. One is a foreign worker from India. The travel history of the remaining 3 cases was not available. Eleven of the strains belong to phage type E1 while 2 strains belong to phage type O.

These findings are very significant, as most of the chloramphenicol resistant strains of *S. typhi* are isolated from imported cases. The purpose of this letter is to inform clinicians to be aware of the possibility of resistance while treating typhoid cases, especially when there is a history of travel to India, Pakistan or other areas where the prevalence of chloramphenicol resistant *S. typhi* is high. It is also important that these cases are notified to the health authorities for appropriate control measures to prevent the occurrence of an outbreak due to such strains.

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Reference

1. Amir MK, Cheong Y and Noorliza MN. An epidemiological study of chloramphenicol resistant *S. typhi* infection in Selangor Darul Ehsan (March-July 1991). In: Pang T, Koh CL and Puthuchery SD (eds). Typhoid Fever: Strategies for the 90's. World Scientific 1992;23.