Minutes of Meeting of the Subcommittee
on the Family Neisseriaceae

Rome, September 9, 1953

A meeting of the Subcommittee on the Nomenclature of the Neisseriaceae was held at the University of Rome at 2 P.M. on Wednesday, September 9, 1953, with Dr. E.G.D. Murray presiding. Those present were:

Chairman: Dr. E.G.D. Murray, Montreal, Canada

Members: Miss Sophia M. Cohen, Albany, N.Y., U.S.A.
Dr. C. Phillip Miller, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.
Dr. A.R. Prévot, Paris, France
Dr. Th. Thjøtta, Oslo, Norway

Secretary: Dr. Sara E. Branham, Bethesda, Md., U.S.A.

It was with great regret that those present heard Dr. Murray announce the death of Dr. Mervyn H. Gordon which occurred during July. Although well past 80 years, Dr. Gordon was actively interested in the work of our committee, and wrote during May to express his regrets at not being able to attend the Rome Congress. We will miss his encouragement very much.

Matters that had been suggested for discussion were taken up in turn.

Dr. Murray had previously read our Committee Report before the Section on Taxonomy on Monday morning, September 7. This report, as well as a copy of our previous Rio Congress report proposing our new classification of meningococci, has now been sent to Dr. R.E. Buchanan in order that the material may be published in the International Bulletin of Bacteriological Nomenclature and Taxonomy of which he is Editor-in-Chief.

The section of our 1953 report giving the distribution of serologic groups of meningococcus stimulated some discussion as to whether an epidemic of cerebrospinal meningitis is necessarily preceded by an increase in the occurrence of Group I strains of meningococcus. Needless to say this question remained unanswered for the present.

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Dr. Thjøtta reported that he and his assistants are studying the type occurrence among meningococci in Norway. They have collected a number of strains from throat cultures and have stored them for further study in a "freeze-dried" state. He expressed the wish that American sera could be used for this typing in order that the results might be comparable with other studies in type distribution that have been made during recent years.

One of Dr. Thjøtta's assistants, Dr. Steen, will soon publish a report of his work on the basic nutritional requirements of the meningococcus. Another is studying various techniques for doing agglutination tests.

The desirability of designating some one place as a central "clearing house" for those cultures of the Neisseriaceae that seem to deserve study was emphasized, and it was decided that such cultures be sent to Dr. Sara E. Branham at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda 14, Maryland, U.S.A. Dr. Branham will not study these cultures herself but will receive them, together with information concerning them, and assign them to those members of the Committee whose special field of interest is most nearly related to them. Thus valuable strains will not be lost just because no one knows where to send them. It is hoped that meningococci of the French Type D and of the Gordon-Murray Type IV may be found. Strains of Neisseria subflava are especially needed for Dr. Pelczar's study of relations between the pigmented species, and it is desirable to find other strains of N. hemolyans described by Dr. Thjøtta. Anaerobic Neisseria are especially wanted, since the anaerobic Gram-negative cocci found by both Dr. Murray and Dr. Pelczar have all been Veillonellae.

Considerable concern was expressed as to a reliable source of diagnostic sera for studies with all these microorganisms. The acute phase of this problem with the meningococcus has been solved by an offer from Miss Cohen to send diagnostic sera for Groups I, II, and II alpha (our proposed A, B, and C) meningococci to members of the Committee. This is not a public offer as Miss Cohen's supply of sera is limited, but the provision for reliable and uniform sera for members of the Committee is indeed a valuable contribution to the work of our group.

Dr. Prévot expressed a wish that our Committee could send a young person to work with him at the Institut Pasteur

in Paris for a year in order to become familiar with his methods of study. He feels that the anaerobic Neisseriae which he has described are so delicate that it is extremely difficult to send them to other laboratories. He has wished to extend this invitation before, but has been handicapped by the lack of funds for the young person's expenses.

It was suggested that it might be quite feasible for the said young person, if sufficiently well qualified, to obtain a fellowship to defray his expenses. Several practical sources for such a fellowship were suggested. This would be an excellent opportunity for someone and names of possible candidates were mentioned.

Specific problems to be undertaken were next discussed, especially in relation to classification. It was felt that a study of the species validity of the Veillonellae was indicated. Dr. Prévot suggested that the taxonomic position of N. vulvovaginitis be allowed to "ride along" for a while until someone could have time to study it. Some discussion was also given to the N. winogradski recently reported by De Mello. Dr. Prévot thinks it falls into the genus Neisseria, but says that 2 other laboratories have reported it as Moraxella and Mima respectively. According to Dr. Prévot cultures of this N. winogradski can be obtained from Professor Lemoigne, Chief, Service of Fermentations, Institut Pasteur, Paris XV, France.

Dr. Murray's recently isolated sheep strain of Neisseria, and the N. caviae described by Dr. Pelczar definitely indicate further search for Neisseria in animals.

Miss Cohen had previously suggested the desirability of following up the transformation of type in meningococci as described by Alexander and Redman. This work has been published (Jour. Exp. Med., 97:797. 1953) "Transformation of type specificity of meningococci: change in heritable type induced by type-specific extracts containing desoxyribonucleic acid").

The Committee thinks that all of these proposed problems are well worthwhile. So far, no one has expressed any definite intention of undertaking any one of them. It is hoped that members of our group who can work along these lines, or who can find someone who would like to follow them up, will do so.

Sara E. Branham, Secretary