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RECOGNITION OF THE DREPANOCYTOSIS AS A PRIORITY
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH BY THE NEXT SESSION OF THE
WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

(Item Proposed by the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Congo)

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DREPANOCYTOSIS EPIDEMIOLOGY

The most frequent hereditary disease of the blood worldwide, drepanocytosis affects approximately 50 million persons throughout the world. It is present mostly in inter-tropical Africa between the 15th southern parallel and the 20th northern parallel. In some countries, 30% of the population are carriers of this genetic pathology whose most virulent S/S form is fatal for children before the age of 5, while the A/S version requires lifelong treatment.

It has now been established that there is an obvious link between Drepanocytosis and the malaria resistance observed in endemic malaria regions. Specialists have also observed that this disease is a risk factor for HIV infection, particularly through blood transfusion.

TREATMENT

Currently, there is no specific treatment for this genetic pathology. Treatment consists essentially of taking care of symptoms resulting from attacks, some of which, in cases of severe anaemia, require emergency blood transfusion or marrow grafting in extreme cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The link established between drepanocytosis, a hereditary blood disease and malaria as well as HIV infection, argue in favour of improved care for this pathology in Africa. This approach could come under the framework of broad partnership between States, international organizations such as WHO, and the private sector, particularly pharmaceutical laboratories and research centres.

By soliciting the support of the AU Assembly for the inclusion of Drepanocytosis on the list of **Priorities for Public Health** by the next Session of the World Health Assembly, the WHO decision-making body, Africa could then hope for a significant reduction in the cost of treatment as well as more targeted orientation of genetic research towards this disease.

The major consequence of the success of such an initiative would be significant reduction of mortality due to malaria and more effective prevention of risks of HIV infections, particularly in children below the age of 5.

Recognition of the drepanocytosis as a priorityfor public health by the next session of the World Health assembly (Item proposed by the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Congo)

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