No Evidence for a Role of Enteroadherent Escherichia coli in Diarrhea in Human Immunodeficiency Virus–Infected Patients

To the Editor—Diarrhea is an important problem in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)–infected patients. Although enteric pathogens are implicated in the majority of cases, the diarrhea remains unexplained in about one-third of patients [1]. Recently, Kotler et al. [2] observed adherent bacteria in rectal biopsies from 11 of 51 patients with diarrhea and in none of 15 patients without diarrhea (difference not significant). In 4 of those 11 cases with diarrhea, other pathogens able to cause diarrhea were detected as well. In addition, although enteroadherent E. coli were present in cultures from rectal biopsies, no association between those bacteria with diarrhea was demonstrated. Results from a study among adults in Zambia suggested an association between the presence of HfP-2 cell–adherent E. coli in stool specimens and diarrhea in HIV-infected patients. However, an HIV-positive control group without diarrhea was not included [3]. In a study among HIV-infected and HIV-uninfected infants in Zambia with a high prevalence of AAEC, as detected by DNA hybridization, no association between such E. coli strains and diarrhea was observed [9].

We did not test isolates from rectal biopsies, nor did we perform the HfP-2 cell adherence assay. However, hybridization of the bacterial growth of a CLED agar plate provided us with a sensitive method, as has been shown for detection of enterotoxigenic E. coli [5]. The high rate of DAEC present in our control group justifies the conclusion that the presence of DAEC is similar among HIV-infected patients with and without diarrhea, even when additional detection methods are applied.

In conclusion, our pilot study does not support a role for enteroadherent E. coli in diarrhea in HIV-infected patients in the Netherlands.

Constance Schultzz, F. Snijders, and J. Dankert
Department of Medical Microbiology; Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, Tropical Medicine and AIDS, Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands

References