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Scrapie and Kuru.

Author(s) : [HADLOW, W. J.](#)Correspondence : [Lancet](#) 1959 pp.289-90

Abstract : The suggestion that scrapie, an endemic disease of sheep, might be a form of myopathy, is rejected by the author, who writes to point out certain similarities between this disease and kuru, a neurodegenerative disease endemic in the Fore tribe of New Guinea [this *Bulletin*, 1959, v. 56, 1283].

Both are endemic in well-defined populations, since scrapie occurs only in certain areas and kuru is confined to a single ethnic group, the Fore tribe. Each may develop months after separation of the individual from his native stock, and each may be transmitted to the progeny of union of affected with previously unaffected stock. In neither case has a recognized bacterial or viral agent been isolated, toxic and nutritional features

recognizable in either and both appear to be determined genetically. In each course is relentlessly progressive, remission or recovery being very rare. E are broadly characterized by tremors, ataxia and defects in behaviour.

There are certain striking similarities in the histopathology of the central ne in each disease. In scrapie, a characteristic finding is the presence of single soap-bubble " vacuoles in the cytoplasm of affected nerve cells, and similar been observed in kuru. Certain non-specific neuronal degenerative change to both, also intense astrocytic activity with minimal myelin degeneration. Inf reactions are also unusually meagre for so extensive an " encephalitis ", wh cerebrospinal fluid shows no constant or significant abnormalities in either (An important discovery has been that scrapie can be transmitted to previou stock by the intracerebral or subcutaneous inoculation of brain homogenate affected sheep, though the manifestations of the disease may not appear f months thereafter. The nature of the transmissible pathogenic factor is so undiscovered. The author suggests that experiments should be made to tr from man to a laboratory primate. [Since such an experiment might open th further investigation into the aetiology of kuru, which at present has reache this seems a most valuable suggestion.] *J. H. Walters.*

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