

THE BeTER LeTTER

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BTER Foundation Launches Its Long-Awaited Newsletter

With this issue of *The BeTER LeTTER*, the BioTherapeutics, Education and Research (BTER) Foundation inaugurates its first periodical publication. Readers will find news, information, and events concerning biotherapy. This issue features some of the work of the BTER Foundation during its first year, as well as a report of the latest maggot therapy research: treating diabetic foot ulcers in Egypt.

Like The BTER Foundation itself, *The BeTER LeTTER* aims to serve therapists, patients, students, Foundation supporters and anyone else interested in biotherapeutic medicine.

Future issues of The BeTER LeTTER will bring news and

information about the principles and practice of maggot therapy, leech therapy (helminotherapy), honeybee sting therapy (apitherapy), pet therapy, cancer sniffing dogs, bacteriophage, and a host of other new and rediscovered symbiotic medical treatments.

In the coming year, we shall expand this periodical to include solicited and unsolicited submissions, research articles and current events. If we succeed in finding greater support and sponsorship, we will be able to bring you a more substantial newsletter. Already we have received requests to develop this bulletin into a scientific periodical, but this will take some time and greater sponsorship.

Let us know your opinion. Contact the Editor if you wish to suggest a topic for review, to report a relevant news story, or to contribute an article. We are seeking staff writers and editorial assistants.

Above all else, share this newsletter with your colleagues, your friends and family, your patients and therapists. The BTER Foundation is about sharing. We share information with therapists and patients; we share treatment with those who can not afford it. Now it is your turn to share *The BeTER LeTTER*.

--- The Editorial Staff

Maggot Therapy in Egypt, Reviewed

Tarek I. Tantawi, Ph.D.
Alexandria, Egypt

Chronic lower-extremity wounds, especially in patients with diabetes, are a significant health problem in Egypt. In 2000, a maggot therapy research project was initiated at Alexandria University. The aim of the project was to con-

duct laboratory and clinical studies on the use of medicinal maggots for treating venous leg and diabetic foot ulcers and to establish a maggot therapy unit capable of offering its services throughout the entire country.

Medicinal maggots were produced from colonies of two

blow flies, *Lucilia sericata* and *Chrysomya albiceps*, maintained at the Forensic Entomology Laboratory, Department of Zoology. Maggot sterility tests were performed in the Microbiology Division, at the Faculty of Science.

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BioTherapists contribute stories and advice to readers of **The BeTTER LeTTER**

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Letter from the Director - The Foundation's First Year in Review

The BTER Foundation was created in 2003 to support patient care, education and research in Biotherapy. That first year was exciting and productive.

Like any non-profit charity, the Board of Directors spent the first few months planning and organizing the Foundation's activities, and submitting the state and federal documents necessary to establish itself as a Public Charity, with tax exempt status granted under tax law 501(c)3.

In its first year, the BTER Foundation initiated several programs which will serve therapists and patients of biotherapy for years to come.

Advances in Education

The BTER website, www.BTERFoundation.org was created by Computer Science students at the University of California, Irvine. The internet site has made the Foundation and its operation more visible to the public, and soon will become a repository for information, and contacts in the fields of biotherapy.

The BTER Foundation began production on two educational films: a 45-minute training film for maggot debridement therapy (MDT)

therapists and a 15-minute educational film for MDT patients. Filming is nearly complete, and we are now looking for corporate sponsors to help us cover the post-production and editing costs.

Advances in Patient Care

The Board of Directors voted to establish a Patient Assistance Fund that will subsidize the costs of maggot therapy for patients in financial need. Many of the 43 million Americans without adequate medical insurance have chronic wounds that could benefit from maggot debridement therapy but lack the resources to pay for it. Application forms will be posted on the internet and sent to suppliers as soon as they are finalized.

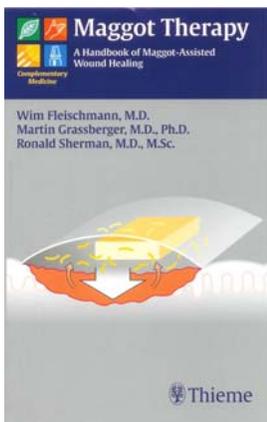
Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement for maggots has been inconsistent and unreliable. The Foundation filed an official request with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requesting that a specific Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA) Common Procedural Coding System ("HCPCS code") be assigned for Medical Maggots. Assignment of a HCPCS code is the first step towards reliable and consistent

reimbursement for medicinal maggots. Therapist reimbursement was already established when the American Medical Association (AMA) committee for Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) determined that the application or removal of maggot dressings should be coded and billed as CPT #97601 (selective debridement of necrotic tissue, without anesthesia).

Advances in Research

Maggot therapy, leech therapy, and the other biotherapies are still with us today because research has helped them to better meet today's medical challenges. Innovative research is also responsible for the discovery and application of newer biotherapeutic modalities, such as helminotherapy and cancer-sniffing dogs. The BTER Foundation recognizes the importance of research, and has approved a fund to support biotherapy research and publication. Clinical and policy research conducted or supported by the Foundation will appear in coming issues of *The BeTER LeTTER*

Contact the BTER Foundation for more information or to offer your support.



The BTER Foundation is giving away free copies of the first English language *Maggot Therapy* handbook with each donation over \$250. If the book is purchased through the BTER Foundation web site, fifteen percent of the cost of each book sold will be donated automatically to the Foundation.

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Biotherapy in the News ~ ~ ~

Medical Maggots™ — On January 12, 2004, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted permission to produce and market Medical Maggots™ brand of disinfected blow fly larvae for “debriding non-healing necrotic skin and soft tissue wounds, including pressure ulcers, venous stasis ulcers, neuropathic foot ulcers, and non-healing traumatic or post surgical wounds.” Medical Maggots™ are currently produced at the University of California, Irvine.

Helminotherapy — *Trichuris suis ova* (TSO), a swine whipworm, has been shown in recent studies to be effective in decreasing symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease, when swallowed biweekly. TSO was reportedly approved in Europe recently, and application to the FDA for use in the U.S. is reportedly underway. Primary studies of TSO were carried out by Dr. Joel Weinstock at the University of Iowa. His work will be discussed in a forthcoming issue.

In Britain — The National Health Service (NHS) added maggots to its formulary: any general practitioner may now prescribe maggot therapy for wound care. This move makes MDT (or larvotherapy, as it is often called in the UK) an outpatient treatment that no longer requires travel to a major wound care center or referral hospital. Meanwhile, an NHS-backed clinical trial of maggot therapy for venous stasis ulcers in the U.K. has been approved.

Hot off the press — The BTER Foundation plans a Maggot Therapy workshop in January 29, 2005. This will be the first such workshop, and will include hands-on training in dressing application, lectures on the indications and contra-indications of maggot therapy, and an opportunity to meet with experts in the field. Contact the Foundation for more information (e-mail: info@BTERFoundation.org or phone: 949-509-0989)

Maggot Therapy in Egypt, Reviewed

Story continue from page 1

Maggot therapy was applied to patients admitted to the Vascular Surgery Unit at the Faculty of Medicine and the Diabetic Foot Clinic of the Main Alexandria University Hospital.

The outcomes of this maggot therapy project were fruitful: Maggot therapy is now practiced as a regular, efficient method of wound debridement at the Main Alexandria University Hospital. To date, more than 250 patients had their venous and diabetic wounds successfully treated. The data of our studies have been

presented at the 21st Annual Summer Meeting of the Egyptian Society of Surgeons, Alexandria, in September 2003, and at the International Vascular and Endovascular Congress, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, in October 2003. Two Masters of Science (M.Sc.) students at the Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, completed their theses on the utility of maggot therapy in wound management. The Egyptian Medical Syndicate invited members of the maggot therapy team to give a series of lectures exploring the entomological, microbiological and clinical aspects of maggot ther-

apy. These lectures were very important in spreading the word among the Egyptian medical community.

Soon, the Egyptian Biosurgical Center (EBC) will be established in Alexandria. The EBC will produce and supply medicinal maggots upon requests from physicians, surgeons and hospitals. For more information, contact:

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Diabetic heel ulcer treated by the Egyptian Biosurgical Center with two cycles of MDT, seen here before, during and four weeks following therapy. The wound healed four weeks later.

Need a Definition for Biotherapy?

What do you say when someone asks you, “What is ‘Biotherapy’?” Try this:

Biotherapies use live animals to treat and diagnose medical illnesses. Examples of biotherapeutics include: “seeing eye” dogs, cancer-sniffing dogs, maggot therapy, leech therapy (hirudotherapy), honey bee sting therapy (apitherapy), bacteriophage and microbial therapy, and intestinal worm therapy (helminotherapy).

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www.BTERFoundation.org

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