

Acute Flaccid Paralysis as Expressed in Art

Joanne Hassan ^{1,2*}, Joyceline Kinyua², Peter Borus⁴, Laura Wangai³

¹Institute of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases (ITROMID), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

²Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), Nairobi, Kenya

³Kirinyaga University College, Kenya

⁴World Health Organization (WHO), Kenya

*Corresponding author: Joanne Hassan, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), P.O. Box 54628-00200, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: +254722789783; Email: hassanjoanne@gmail.com

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Commentary

Historically, poliovirus infection has been an important cause of Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) worldwide [1]. Human artistic manifestations in form of painted or carved objects traced acute flaccid paralysis back to Ancient Egypt. The 1500 BC Egyptian Wall stele of a priest called Ruma with a shorter leg and helping himself with a stick. This art shows a withered leg of the priest, and his foot in the equinus position. This deformities characteristic of an attack of paralytic polio (Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Museum AIN 0134) is considered to be one of the first representations of a polio victim. This piece of art represents a polio victim in the 18th Dynasty (1403-1365 BC) (Figure 1) [2].

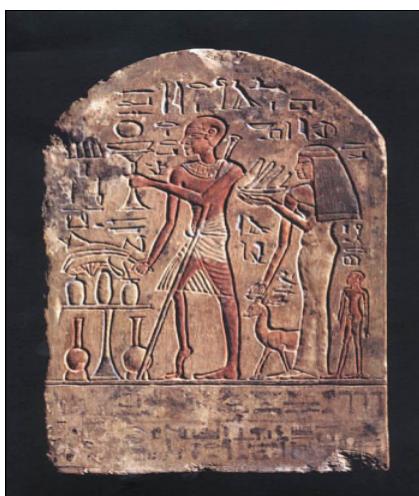


Figure 1: The 1500 BC stele of a priest called Ruma with a shorter leg and helping himself with a stick.

Poliomyelitis is also in the center of the sad inheritance, 1899 painting by Spanish artist Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida. The subject in (Figure 2) was a depiction of crippled children bathing at the sea in Valencia, under the supervision of a monk. The polio epidemic that struck some years earlier the land of Valencia is present, possibly for the first time in the history of painting, through the image of the two affected children [3]



Figure 2: Sad inheritance, 1899 painting by Spanish artist Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida.

Another evidence of acute flaccid paralysis is seen in the painting by Francis Bacon: after Muybridge 1965 shows a painting of a woman emptying a bowl of water and paralytic child walking the balustrade (Figure 3) [4].



Figure 3: Painting by Francis Bacon: after Muybridge 1965.

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