

Preface or Why Parasitology Research

Parasitology is an **interdisciplinary science** combining the activities of biologists, human physicians, pharmacists and veterinarians in the fight against parasites introducing diseases in humans and animals. Since its early beginnings in the middle of the eighteenth century parasitologists have acted together in international campaigns, although nationalists in many countries wanted “*to cook their own soup*”. These common efforts were based on the convincing insights that agents of diseases will not stop at the border of a country as was shown by the pandemics that “*knocked at the European doors*” at regular intervals killing millions of human beings and/or their live stock animals. Thus, bad experiences with flea-transmitted plaque disease, mosquito-transmitted malaria, or with faecally transmitted cholera forced the international scientific community into close cooperations in spite of the intensions of many local politicians. Through these efforts research over the last 150 years has revealed knowledge on the life cycles of the most important parasites, the discovery of their pathogenicity and physiology as well as deep insights into the pathways of transmission. On the basis of this knowledge and the development of very skilful methods of investigation the industry was able to produce potent products that allowed a quick and efficient diagnosis as well as the initiation of a powerful control. Without these success stories it would not have been possible to keep (rather) healthy and to nourish so many of the seven billion human inhabitants on earth. However, drug resistance, bad environmental conditions, wars and over-crowded towns always give parasites a new chance. Thus, the struggle for life affects both parasites and hosts – up to now there has been no winner!

Therefore it is required that parasites stay within the **focus of research**, since globalization and its effects – even those of low grade –and global warming may bring new dangers for the world community of humans. This makes it necessary that all disciplines of biological, veterinarian and human medical parasitology remain strong. The pandemics of several emerging diseases recently have proven that we “*all live on very thin ice*” or “*on an already rumbling volcano*”.

This book, published soon after the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the German Society of Parasitology presents factual accounts of important parasites and reviews recent knowledge and needs. Especially in medicinal entomology and acarology many gaps have to be filled in order to withstand parasites, which have been successful for millions of years while the “newcomer” *Homo sapiens* has been around for less than 200,000 years.

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