

Cavity Reports

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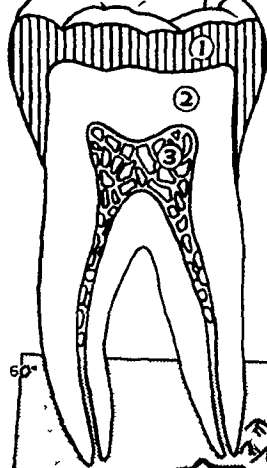
been drinking water from the Bolan River, which is rich in fluoride. Therefore, it is impossible to compare the dental health of the population at different periods; fluoride protected the teeth of all.

"It's a rather unhappy finding in some ways because it doesn't allow

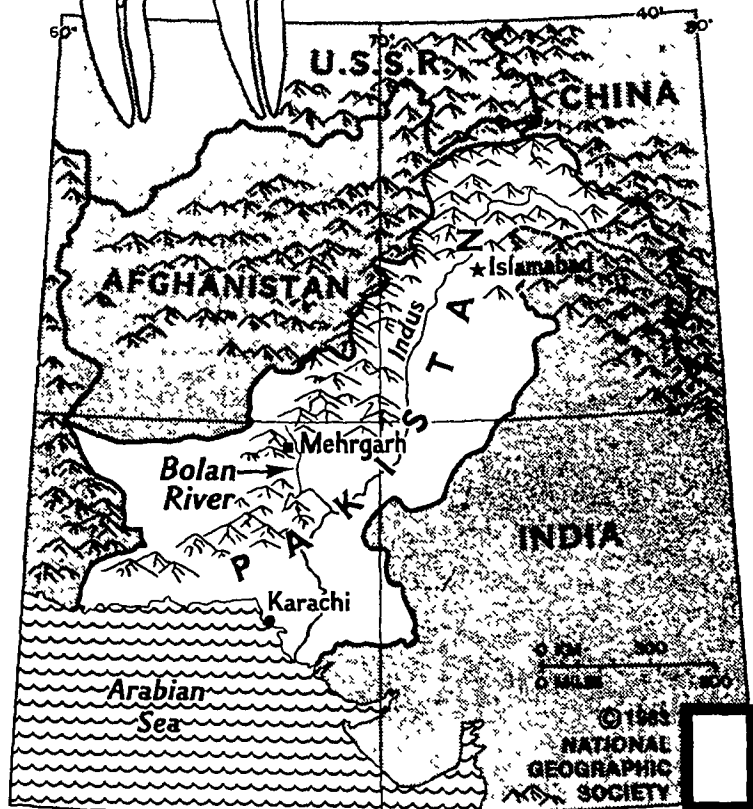
us to investigate the problem of caries incidence and agriculture," Lukacs says.

The heavily fluoridated water in the river comes from the melting snow in the mountains to the west of Mehrgarh, mountains heavy in deposits of the mineral fluorite, from which fluoride is derived.

ANCIENT SOURCE OF TOOTH PROTECTION



Natural fluoride in Bolan River water has helped harden the enamel (1) of developing teeth in children, even in prehistoric Mehrgarh. Teeth from ancient skeletons show a high level of fluoride intake. Once ingested, it is absorbed by the dentin (2) and enamel through the blood vessels in the pulp (3). In mature teeth, fluoride absorbed by contact with the tooth makes it resistant to decay-causing acids. Experts think fluoride also inhibits formation of these acids.



"The concentration of fluoride in the Bolan River is 2 milligrams per liter," says Lukacs. Normally, water contains less than half this amount.

In studying the teeth of prehistoric skeletons, Lukacs is interested in three factors: the structure of the teeth of the entire population, which, because teeth have their own "genetic code," can help document the origin and migration patterns of a group; tooth size, which is a key to determining the subsistence pattern of a prehistoric population; and tooth pathology, indications of disease.

Lukacs studied more than 1,000 prehistoric teeth from Mehrgarh in his research, which was supported by the National Geographic Society. He found that the caries rate was a mere 1.3 percent, and that the rate of tooth loss before death was less than 1 percent.

Spots and Pitting

The Oregon anthropologist points out two other factors in the high rate of fluorosis, which was so extensive that it often led to brown spots and the pitting of the teeth.

One is that people drink more water when they live in arid

tropical climates such as that at Mehrgarh. The other is that the prehistoric peoples in the area, like those living there today, probably washed their food in the water from the Bolan River. The result was a high fluoride intake.

Lukacs also has words of caution for other scientists working with prehistoric skeletons who find low caries rates.

"They may be a little too casual when they say this is due to a hunting-and-gathering society, or to characterize the people they are working with as nonagricultural," he says. "They've got to be a little more careful. It's no great time-consuming chore to take a sample of water and have it tested for fluoride."

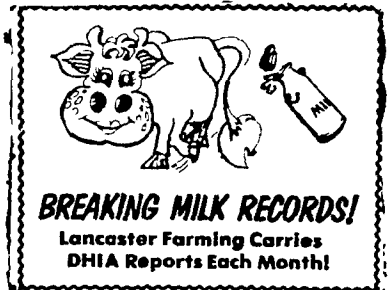
First Female Ag Agent Dies

BALTIMORE — Beatrice Cissel Pfefferkorn, 75, of West Friendship, a Howard county native and Maryland's first female Extension agricultural agent, died recently at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore after a long illness.

Mrs. Pfefferkorn was well-known to rural leaders throughout the state as a teacher, volunteer 4-H leader, and Grange officer. Known to three generations of 4-H members as "Aunt Bea," Mrs. Pfefferkorn was appointed on March 6, 1944, as an assistant agricultural agent in Howard county for the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Maryland. She served in that

position until June 30, 1949.

Mrs. Pfefferkorn's break into what had been exclusively a male domain was occasioned by a shortage of young men in rural areas during World War II.



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