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Comparative Accuracy and ‘Field Friendly’ Effectiveness of Diagnostic Tools for Lymphatic Filariasis and Neurocysticercosis in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste with Consideration on the Impact of Parasitic Reduction Programs

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20 July 2010
Statement of Access

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David Reeve

Statement of Sources

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

..............................................

David Reeve
Declaration on Ethics

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999), the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (1997), the James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics; Standard Practices and Guidelines (2001), and the James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the Medical Research Advisory Committee of Papua New Guinea (MRAC No: 06/02, 06/05), James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (H1423) and The Townsville Hospital District Ethics Committee (32/03).

David Reeve
Statement of Contribution of Others

In Timor-Leste, the staff of the World Health Organization, with special acknowledgement to Dr Alex Andjaparidze, Dr Megan Counahan and Salavador Amara and from the Ministry of Health, Antonio Da Costa and the District Health Service in Suai and Lautem. These individuals and organisations arranged the logistics of the sentinel sites and assisted in collecting samples and demographic data. Associate Professor Wayne Melrose examined the faecal concentrates for protozoa, ova and cysts,

In Papua New Guinea, from the Ministry of Health, Leo Sora Makita and Norma Sargon, and the numerous Health Staff at New Ireland, West New Britain, East New Britain, Oro and Bougainville assisted in organisation and participated in collecting samples and performing the ICT test.

In Japan at Asahikawa University, Dr Toni Wandra assisted in testing specimens for neurocysticercosis and tested the specimens using recombinant glycoproteins.

Assistance was provided by Sharon Cooke who arranged and collected specimens from patients with Crohn’s disease.

The thesis was edited by Dr Lisa Lines of Elite Editing & Tutoring, and editorial intervention was restricted to Standards D and E of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice.
Acknowledgements

I acknowledge many people who assisted and provided support.

From James Cook University, Dr Wayne Melrose who provided direction and organised the logistics in the various work that was undertaken, Dr Natkunam Keethesam who provided guidance with the lymphocyte proliferation assays and Dr Jeffrey Warner who was always there for a sounding board. Dr John Croese from Townsville Hospital and Professor Rick Speare provided direction in experimental design for the immunological response of Crohn's patients to hookworm infection.

In Japan at Asahikawa University, Professor Akira Ito and Associate Professor Hiroshi Yamasaki who ran the 2nd International Seminar on Technology Transfer for Immunodiagnosis of Cysticercosis and Echinococcosis. In England at the University of Nottingham, Professor David Pritchard and Dr Alan Brown who provided guidance and assistance in the immunology of hookworm.
Abstract

This research has contributed to the field of parasitology by evaluating several diagnostic tests in the area of lymphatic filariasis and determining their suitability for field surveys. A lymphatic filariasis survey in Papua New Guinea (PNG) using the TropBio Assay showed a wide range of prevalence with locations of high prevalence among areas of low prevalence that could be reservoirs of infection if not covered by the filariasis elimination program. Additionally, the results of parasitological surveys conducted in Timor-Leste and PNG are presented, which show the presence of human parasites in these countries previously unreported in the literature. Finally, research is presented that suggests that the presence of intestinal parasites may confer some benefit to the human host.

Diagnostic tests are just as important as the medications, vaccinations and therapies used to prevent and control population health issues. Without these tests, measurement of many health problems could not occur. They are also required to determine if activities designed to address a particular health problem are succeeding. Standardised and validated diagnostic tests are therefore a mandatory requirement for monitoring and evaluation of many health programs.

An essential element for determining whether a disease is eradicable is an effective diagnostic tool. Prioritised research needs for eliminating lymphatic filariasis include defining the comparative accuracy of diagnostics and taking advantage of improving user friendliness. In 2005, a new test kit became available for detecting infection by Brugia spp. in infected individuals. The BRUGIArapid cassette uses a recombinant antigen, BmR1, to detect antibody present in serum and whole blood samples. The
literature was evaluated to determine the relationship between prevalence of
seropositivity using tests incorporating BmR1 and prevalence of microfilaraemia.
Additionally, the test was evaluated to determine its suitability for use in field
conditions. The *BRUGI Arapid* cassette was used in several sites throughout Timor-
Leste. A literature review showed acceptable sensitivity and specificity and minimal
cross-reactions with other parasitic infections. There was a linear relationship between
the prevalence of microfilaraemia and prevalence of seropositivity to BmR1. The
equation predicts that a location with 1% microfilaraemia prevalence will have a 9.3%
(95% PI, 5.2 –13.3) seropositivity to BmR1 prevalence. The test was quick and easy to
use at the field sites. Problems noted with the test were poor fitting reagent bottle lids
that leaked buffer during transport and testing, inaccurate instructions and a failure of
the test pad to clear blood from the reading area at the recommended reading time.
Changes were made to the design of the buffer bottles and test instructions were
updated. The *BRUGI Arapid* cassette was accepted for use by the World Health
Organization (WHO) in Brugian filariasis elimination programs.

There have been mixed reports of the sensitivity of the filter paper version of the
TropBio *W. bancrofti* ELISA. This technique was evaluated as part of the baseline
surveys undertaken in PNG for the elimination of filariasis program. Nocturnal blood
was collected and tested for microfilaraemia and by the ICT, TropBio ELISA and the
filter paper version of the TropBio ELISA kit for antigenaemia. The absorbent pad from
the ICT was removed and tested by the TropBio ELISA kit. To reduce the complexity
of the TropBio ELISA the necessity of the boiling step to inactivate rheumatoid factor
was investigated. A modified field version of the TropBio ELISA, the fast friendly field
test, that has no boiling step and is read visually, was evaluated and compared to the
standard test. The filter paper technique showed poor sensitivity (67.2%, 95% CI: 62.1–
72.1) although it was similar to the ICT (63.6%, 95% CI: 58.6–68.4) when compared to the serum TropBio ELISA. Using the filter paper from the ICT had better sensitivity (83.2%, 95% CI: 74.7–89.7) but was poor when used at another site (41.7%, 95% CI: 22.4–63.4) when compared to the serum version. Paired measurements using boiled and unboiled specimens were significantly correlated (r=0.97, p<0.001). The fast friendly field test had 96.0% (CI, 79.7–99.9) sensitivity and 98.4% (CI, 94.2–99.8) specificity compared to the serum version. The filter paper technique is unsuitable for due to its poor sensitivity. The boiling step appears unnecessary in the standard TropBio ELISA. The fast friendly field version shows acceptable sensitivity and specificity but may be cumbersome in field settings.

Baseline surveys of *Wuchereria bancrofti* lymphatic filariasis prevalence were conducted at two localities in each of the PNG provinces of New Ireland, West New Britain, East New Britain, Bougainville and Oro in 2006 prior to the beginning of mass drug administration for the Filariasis Elimination Program. These data were collected as part of the monitoring and evaluation requirements for the program. Venous blood was collected between the hours of 1900 and 0100, a thick blood smear prepared and examined for microfilariae and the serum tested by the TropBio ELISA. There were no antigenaemic individuals found in Rorovana, Bougainville and the prevalence ranged from 1.0% (95% CI: 0.2–1.8) at Oro Bay, Oro to 64.7% (95% CI: 59.5–69.9) in Sipai, Bougainville. Microfilaraemia was not found at the two sites in the Oro province with the highest prevalence found at Kokopo, East New Britain (22.6%, 95% CI: 15.1–30.1). Overall, antigenaemia rose with age with a peak prevalence in the 40–44 year old age group. Excluding Rorovana, there was no difference in antigenaemia prevalence (p=0.29) between the genders but males had a higher prevalence of microfilaraemia compared to females (p<0.01). West New Britain had undergone a mass drug
administration (MDA) one month before the baseline prevalence testing had started. In Kokopo, West New Britain there was a 36.4\% (95\% CI: 30.0–42.8) antigenaemia prevalence but no cases of microfilaraemia. PNG shows a wide range of lymphatic filariasis prevalence. Concentration of lymphatic filariasis in small communities could act as a reservoir source for surrounding districts if these are missed during the MDA. Successful baseline surveys were conducted using the TropBio ELISA. As this test quantifies the amount of antigen, rather than simply giving an ordinal positive or negative result, comparison with results from further surveys will allow a better measure of the effects of MDA.

Timor-Leste’s elimination of lymphatic filariasis program includes the use of albendazole annually for all adults and six monthly for children aged two to sixteen years. Children under two receive pyrantel pamoate. These drugs treat the soil-transmitted helminths (STH) *Ascaris lumbricoides*, *Trichuris trichiura* and hookworm. These nematodes cause intestinal problems, contribute to malnutrition and hookworm and whipworm are associated with anaemia. Baseline and post-treatment surveys are necessary to determine the impact of the control program. Three villages, Buihomau, Suai Loro and Sika, were selected and, using local volunteers to approach every household, faecal samples were collected from village residents. The samples were transported back to James Cook University, Australia, preserved in sodium-acetic acid-formalin, concentrated and examined for parasitic protozoan cysts and helminth eggs, larvae or adults. Assessment of intestinal parasites in Timor-Leste revealed an overall prevalence among the three sites of 34.8\%, 1.3\% and 0.9\% of hookworm, *Ascaris lumbricoides* and *Trichuris trichiura* respectively. Most hookworm infections were of light intensity (97.2\%), which may be an artefact due to the delay in processing. Hookworm prevalence increased with age with the highest prevalence found in the ≥ 70
age group (83%). Also of importance were one case of Strongyloides infection and a 2.4% prevalence of taeniasis. The prevalence rate of non-pathogenic Entamoeba coli was 76.6% (95% CI: 72.1–81.1). Prevalence rates for STH in this survey will be used to compare with later surveys and determine the effect of mass drug administration. There have been no cases of Strongyloides spp. and only one case of Taenia solium in Timor-Leste reported in the literature. Free roaming pigs are the most common livestock and there are few latrines available to households in Buichomau and Suai Loro. Therefore, the environmental conditions for neurocysticercosis are present if cysticerci of Taenia solium is in the pig population. Improvements in water supply, sanitation and housing are needed in addition to MDA to reduce the parasite load in Timor-Leste.

Neurocysticercosis is one of the most common parasitic infections of the nervous system but has not been reported in PNG and Timor-Leste despite being present in nearby Indonesia. Testing blood for the presence of antibody can be a sensitive and specific method of determining neurocysticercosis. Serum samples from past parasitological surveys in PNG, Timor-Leste and Irian Jaya were tested by enzyme linked immunosorbent assay and immunoblot using glycoproteins from T. solium prepared by isoelectric-focusing and recombinant protein Ag1V1/Ag2. Using glycoproteins 1.7%, 2.1% and 2.0% of samples from Timor-Leste, PNG and Irian Jaya were repeatedly positive in the ELISA. There were two samples positive from each of Timor-Leste and PNG using purified glycoproteins and recombinant protein in the ELISA and immunoblot. Further surveys and testing is required to confirm this finding and if found, intervention measures should be put in place.

The absence of parasitological infection in humans has been suggested as the cause for the rise in some allergic and autoimmune diseases including Crohn’s disease (CD). Although the cause of CD is not known, the yeast Saccharomyces cerevisiae has been
implicated. CD is a granulomatous disease that shows a Th1 cytokine profile. In contrast, immune responses to infection by *Necator americanus* shows a bias towards a Th2 cytokine pattern. Patients with CD given *Trichuris suis* orally have shown significant improvement. CD patients were inoculated with hookworm and the immune response to several crude antigens was measured. Compared to controls, CD patients had a greater lymphoproliferative response to crude antigen from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (p<0.05) and *Bacteroides fragilis* (p<0.05). Cytokine profiles were determined from whole blood cultures with crude antigen. Median interferon-γ production towards *B. fragilis* was lower (p<0.05) in CD patients with hookworm and taking methotrexate compared to controls. Net Interferon-γ/Net IL-10 ratios from whole blood stimulated with *S. cerevisiae* showed a step wise increase with CD patients with hookworm infection having lower ratios than CD patients without hookworm or control subjects. *S. cerevisiae* appears to have a role in the aetiology of CD while *N. americanus* may modify the immune response in CD patients. Consideration should therefore be given to the possible rise of allergic or autoimmune diseases when reducing parasite loads in populations.

This work has contributed to evaluating the comparative accuracy of diagnostic tests for lymphatic filariasis. The *BRUGIArapid* cassette was shown to be suitable for use in Brugian filariasis elimination programs. Conversely, the studies on the filter paper collection technique to determine TropBio antigenaemia demonstrated that the test was unsuitable. Investigation into the TropBio ELISA methodology resulted in the fast friendly field version of the TropBio ELISA. Baseline prevalence surveys in lymphatic filariasis and soil-transmitted helminths will now allow monitoring and evaluation of these programs to occur. Identification of *Taenia* spp. and serological evidence of neurocysticercosis suggests a comprehensive survey in PNG and Timor-
Leste is required to determine the extent of the problem. Finally, consideration should be given to the possible rise in autoimmune and allergic diseases as an unwanted effect of programs to reduce prevalence and intensity of infection of STH.
**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABTS</td>
<td>2,2'-azino-bis(3-ethylbenzthiazoline-6-sulphonic acid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCA</td>
<td>anti-<em>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</em> antibodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>arbitrary units</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCIP</td>
<td>5-Bromo-4-Chloro-3'-Indoylphosphate p-Toluidine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Crohn’s Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD/A</td>
<td>Crohn’s Disease patients without hookworm infection and without methotrexate treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD/HW</td>
<td>Crohn’s Disease patients with <em>Necator americanus</em> infection and without methotrexate treatment</td>
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<td>CD/HW/M</td>
<td>Crohn’s Disease patients with <em>Necator americanus</em> infection and on methotrexate treatment</td>
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<td>CD/M</td>
<td>Crohn’s Disease patients without <em>Necator americanus</em> infection and with methotrexate treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-#</td>
<td>cluster of differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>confidence interval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO₂</td>
<td>carbon dioxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSF</td>
<td>cerebral spinal fluid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>computed tomography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>diethylcarbamazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>deoxyribonucleic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ds</td>
<td>double strength</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>E/S</td>
<td>excretory/secretory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDTA</td>
<td>ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EITB</td>
<td>enzyme-linked immunoelectrotransfer blot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELISA</td>
<td>enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epg</td>
<td>eggs per gram</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDS</td>
<td>filarial dance sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFF</td>
<td>fast friendly field test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$O</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$SO$_4$</td>
<td>sulphuric acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCl</td>
<td>hydrochloric acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>human immunodeficiency virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>hr</td>
<td>hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBD</td>
<td>inflammatory bowel disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>immunochromatographic card test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFN</td>
<td>interferon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ig</td>
<td>immunoglobulin</td>
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<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>interleukin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kDa</td>
<td>kilodalton</td>
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<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>litre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF</td>
<td>lymphatic filariasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLGP</td>
<td>lentil-lectin affinity purified glycoproteins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>lamina propria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPMC</td>
<td>lamina propria mononuclear cells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDA</td>
<td>mass drug administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mf</td>
<td>microfilariae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ml</td>
<td>millilitre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
<td>millimetre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI</td>
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<td>mRNA</td>
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<td>number</td>
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<td>NaOH</td>
<td>sodium hydroxide</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBT</td>
<td>nitro blue tetrazolium</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>neurocysticercosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMF</td>
<td>nuclepore membrane filtration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD</td>
<td>optical density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td>polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>peripheral blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBMC</td>
<td>peripheral blood mononuclear cells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>phosphate buffered saline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCV</td>
<td>packed cell volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA</td>
<td>ribonucleic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>sodium-acetic acid-formalin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>sodium dodecyl sulphate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST</td>
<td>serum separator tube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STH</td>
<td>soil-transmitted helminths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBS</td>
<td>Thick Blood Smear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TrBS</td>
<td>tris-buffered saline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMED</td>
<td>tetramethylethylenediamine</td>
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<tr>
<td>TGF</td>
<td>transforming growth factor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th(#)</td>
<td>T-helper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMP</td>
<td>3,3’,5,5’-tetramethylbenzidine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>tumour necrosis factor</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>ulcerative colitis</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>µg</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contents

Statement of Access ............................................................................................................................ ii  
Declaration ................................................................................................................................................ ii  
Declaration on Ethics .................................................................................................................................... iii  
Statement of Contribution of Others ...................................................................................................... iv  
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................................... v  
Abstract ...................................................................................................................................................... vi  
Abbreviations .............................................................................................................................................. xiii  
Contents ....................................................................................................................................................... xvii  
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................................ xxii  
List of Figures .............................................................................................................................................. xxv  
Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 4  
       1.1.1 Requirements for the evaluation ........................................................................................................ 4  
       1.1.2 Diagnostic tools ................................................................................................................................... 5  
       1.1.3 Indirect enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (Brugia-ELISA) ...................................................... 6  
       1.1.4 Brugia-Rapid dipstick ....................................................................................................................... 6  
       1.1.5 BRUGIArapid cassette ..................................................................................................................... 7  
       1.1.6 Sensitivity, specificity and relationship to microfilaraemia ............................................................... 7  
       1.1.7 Development after exposure and response after treatment ............................................................... 14  
       1.1.8 Filariasis in Timor-Leste .................................................................................................................. 16  
   1.2 Method ..................................................................................................................................................... 17  
       1.2.1 Site selection ....................................................................................................................................... 17  
       1.2.2 Collection and test method .............................................................................................................. 18  
       1.2.3 Assessment of the BRUGIArapid cassette test kit .......................................................................... 19  
   1.3 Results .................................................................................................................................................... 21  
       1.3.1 Prevalence of sero-positivity to BRUGIArapid cassette and microfilaraemia .................................... 21  
       1.3.2 Delivery and packaging ..................................................................................................................... 25  
       1.3.3 Instruction sheet ............................................................................................................................... 25  
       1.3.4 Usability .............................................................................................................................................. 26
Chapter Two: Evaluation of Field Collection Methods of Diagnostic Tests used in Bancroftian Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis Programs

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The need for antigen tests

2.1.2 ICT

2.1.3 Stability of the ICT result

2.1.4 Detecting the 200–kDa antigen in the ELISA format

2.1.5 TropBio ELISA

2.1.6 Persistence of antigen

2.1.7 Sensitivity and specificity of the ICT

2.1.8 Sensitivity and specificity of the TropBio ELISA

2.1.9 Comparison of Prevalence of the ICT and TropBio ELISA

2.1.10 Association of Og4C3 concentration with microfilaria concentration

2.1.11 Antigenaemia and age

2.1.12 Antigenaemia and gender

2.1.13 Clinical symptoms and antigen tests

2.1.14 Filarial dance sign in chronic filariasis and antigenaemia

2.1.15 TropBio antigen association with filarial antibodies

2.1.16 Antigen levels and treatment

2.1.17 Filter paper collection techniques and the TropBio ELISA

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Collection and handling of blood samples

2.2.2 Filter paper sample processing

2.2.3 Testing method

2.2.4 Testing precipitate by the TropBio ELISA in the field

2.2.5 Comparison of untreated and treated samples in the TropBio ELISA

2.2.6 Fast friendly field test

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Prevalence comparisons

2.3.2 Comparison of sensitivities and specificities
2.3.3 Comparison of titre groups ................................................................. 79
2.3.4 Effect of elution time on the filter paper technique ....................... 79
2.3.5 Filter paper results from specimens collected in Bougainville .......... 80
2.3.6 Testing precipitate for antigen by the TropBio ELISA ..................... 82
2.3.7 Boiled supernatants compared to untreated specimens ................. 82
2.3.8 Fast friendly field test ................................................................. 84

2.4 Discussion and Conclusion ................................................................. 84

Chapter Three: Baseline Monitoring of Lymphatic Filariasis Prevalence in Papua New Guinea .............................................................................................................................. 90

3.1 Introduction ...................................................................................... 90
3.1.1 Requirements for a successful control program.............................. 91
3.1.2 Lymphatic filariasis in PNG .......................................................... 92

3.2 Method ............................................................................................. 93

3.3 Results ............................................................................................. 96
3.3.1 Demographics of sentinel sites ...................................................... 96
3.3.2 Prevalence of antigenaemia and microfilaraemia ......................... 97

3.4 Discussion ....................................................................................... 111

Chapter Four: Baseline Monitoring of Soil-transmitted Helminths Prevalence in Timor-Leste .............................................................................................................................. 116

4.1 Introduction ...................................................................................... 116
4.1.1 Contribution of STH to disease ..................................................... 117
4.1.2 Age and gender profiles of STH infections .................................... 127
4.1.3 Environmental factors in STH transmission ................................. 128
4.1.4 Risk factors .................................................................................. 129
4.1.5 STH interventions ........................................................................ 133
4.1.6 Monitoring and evaluation by parasitological methods ................ 136
4.1.7 STH in Timor-Leste .................................................................... 141
4.1.8 Conditions influenced by STH in Timor-Leste ......................... 142

4.2 Method ............................................................................................. 143
4.2.1 Study area ................................................................................... 143
4.2.2 Questionnaire ............................................................................. 143
4.2.3 Parasitology field procedures ....................................................... 144
4.2.4 Parasitology laboratory procedures ............................................ 145
4.2.5 Analysis ...................................................................................... 146
List of Tables

Table 1–1 Sensitivity of tests using BmR1 antigen for the diagnosis of Brugian Filariasis compared to microfilaraemia .................................................................10
Table 1–2 Combined specificity of *Brugia*-ELISA and *Brugia*-Rapid Dipstick of individuals infected with other parasites .................................................................11
Table 1–3 Comparison of prevalence of microfilaraemia and seropositivity to BmR1 ..12
Table 1–4 Change in prevalence of sero-positivity to BmR1 after treatment of Brugian filariasis .........................................................................................................................15
Table 1–5 Low endemic areas: demographic profile ..................................................22
Table 1–6 Low endemic areas: Results ........................................................................22
Table 1–7 Demographic profile of positive samples in low endemic areas by *BRUGIARapid* .........................................................................................................................23
Table 1–8 Prevalence of seropositivity to *BRUGIARapid* by age in high endemic area (Rembor) .........................................................................................................................24
Table 1–9 Strength of reaction of positive results from Rembor ..................................27
Table 1–10 Grading of the readability of results in Rembor .........................................27
Table 1–11 Per cent positive of faint and clearly visible test line plasma spiked with red cells after a specified incubation time .................................................................32
Table 1–12 Effect of variation in *BRUGIARapid* cassette test protocol .....................34
Table 2–1 Comparison of ICT with detection of microfilaraemia .................................39
Table 2–2 Comparison of TropBio ELISA with detection of microfilaraemia ..........42
Table 2–3 Summary of reports where both TropBio ELISA and ICT are used ...........44
Table 2–4 Changes in Og4C3 antigenaemia after treatment with DEC or DEC/albendazole .........................................................................................................................67
Table 2–5 Studies comparing the TropBio ELISA filter paper with the TropBio ELISA or microfilaraemia .................................................................................................71
Table 2–6 Comparison of antigen diagnostic tests .....................................................78
Table 2–7 Comparison between filter paper and serum TropBio ELISA titre groups ...78
Table 2–8 Comparison between elution of boiled antigen of filter paper overnight and standard filter paper technique .................................................................80
Table 2–9 Comparison of antigen detection techniques of samples collected in Bougainville .................................................................................................................... 81
Table 2–10 Comparison between using precipitate and supernatant in the TropBio ELISA titre groups .......................................................................................................... 82
Table 2–11 Comparison in titres between treated and untreated samples in the TropBio ELISA......................................................................................................................................... 83
Table 2–12 Comparison of FFF with standard TropBio ELISA ........................................ 84
Table 3–1 Locations where blood collection occurred .............................................................................................................................. 95
Table 3–2 Age and gender characteristics of sentinel sites ............................................................................................................................ 98
Table 3–3 Prevalence of antigenaemia and microfilaraemia at sentinel sites .................. 99 (%, 95% CI [n=total number tested]) .............................................................................. 99
Table 3–4 Prevalence of antigenaemia at Amfar and Oro Bay by self-reported place of residence % (n) ........................................................................................................... 100
Table 3–5 Prevalence of titre group by location % (n) ................................................. 101
Table 3–6 Microfilariae density by gender.................................................................... 103
Table 3–7 Percentage of microfilaraemics by blood microfilariae density % (n) ......... 104
Table 3–8 Prevalence of TropBio antigenaemia by age group % (n=total number of individual in each age group) ................................................................................... 105
Table 3–9 Prevalence of antigenaemia and microfilaraemia by gender at each collection site % (n=total number of participants) .................................................................. 110
Table 4–1 Estimates of global prevalence of STH infections, absolute numbers (millions) and prevalence (%) ....................................................................................... 117
Table 4–2 Comparison between albendazole treated and placebo STH prevalence rates and changes in weight gain ........................................................................................ 123
Table 4–3 Classes of intensity for STH (WHO, 2002) .................................................. 133
Table 4–4 Classes of intensity and treatment strategy for STH (WHO, 2002) ............. 134
Table 4–5 Community treatment strategies (WHO, 2006) ............................................ 134
Table 4–6 Prevalence of conditions in Timor-Leste in children under five years of age (Ministry of Health and National Statistics Office et al., 2004) ................................................. 142
Table 4–7 Prevalence of anaemia among children and women in Timor-Leste (Ministry of Health and National Statistics Office et al., 2004) .................................................... 142
Table 4–8 Age and gender by village............................................................................ 147
Table 4–9 Percentage of household livestock ownership (%)....................................... 148
Table 4–10 Characteristics of sub-population who had faecal samples examined ..... 149
Table 4–11 Prevalence of hookworm, *A. lumbricoides*, *T. trichiura* and combined STH
Table 4–12 Intensity of hookworm infection based on WHO criteria (2002).............153
Table 4–13 Prevalence’s of additional cysts and eggs in Timor-Leste.......................155
Table 4–14 Demographics of *T. taenia* infection.....................................................156
Table 5–1 Recent recombinant/synthesised proteins used for diagnosing NCC...........176
Table 5–2 Date of collection of samples used for testing for NCC.............................182
Table 5–3 Prevalence of sero-positive individuals repeatedly positive by ELISA for NCC.............................................................................................................................183
Table 5–4 Results of further serological tests of specimens identified as positive in the ELISA screening test..................................................................................................186
Table 6–1 Percentage of subjects recognising 30 and 33 kDa E/S proteins of *N. americanus* by Western Blot after specified periods.................................209
Table 6–2 Serum cytokine levels in *N. americanus*-infected subjects......................217
List of Figures

Figure 1–1 Relationship between prevalence of microfilaraemia and seropositivity to BmR1 .......................................................... 13
Figure 1–2 Sites in Timor-Leste where the evaluation was conducted. The smaller arrows indicate the five locations (supplied by WHO, Timor-Leste) .......... 18
Figure 1–3 Time course showing the clearing of the BRUGLArapid test pad over 30 minutes ................................................................................. 28
Figure 1–4 Extent of blood clearing from the test area arrow indicates position of positive test line .............................................................................................................. 28
Figure 1–5 Variability of cassettes in clearing with 35 µl of pipetted blood over time .. 29
Figure 1–6 Effect of varying blood volume (µL) and PCV on readability .............. 30
Figure 1–7 Clearance of blood after 60 minutes after allowing liquid front to migrate to end of test strip .............................................................. 31
Figure 1–8 Test lines of two different plasma samples ........................................... 31
Figure 1–9 Reactions of plasma with faint test line (1) and plasma with clearly visible test line (2) spiked with red cells .................................................. 32
Figure 2–1 Comparison of prevalence of antigenaemia and microfilaraemia from multiple studies .......................................................... 56
Figure 2–2 Graph of OD treated versus untreated specimens in the TropBio ELISA ... 83
Figure 3–1 Age and gender characteristics of combined sentinel sites ................. 96
Figure 3–2 Titre group percentage by location ...................................................... 102
Figure 3–3 Microfilariae blood density by location ............................................... 102
Figure 3–4 Relationship between the antigen prevalence and the percentage titre group seven of all TropBio antigenaemics at each collection site .................................................. 103
Figure 3–5 Total prevalence (excluding Rorovana) of Tropbio antigenaemia by age group ...................................................................................... 106
Figure 3–6 Relationship between TropBio antigenaemia prevalence and microfilaraemia prevalence ........................................................................... 107
Figure 3–7 Ratio of TropBio antigenaemia prevalence/microfilaraemia prevalence+ 0.1108
Figure 3–8 Prevalence of microfilaraemia by age range ...................................... 109
Figure 4–1 Study characteristics ........................................................................... 146
Figure 4–2 Demographic profile of responders to questionnaire .................................................. 147
Figure 4–3 Prevalence of hookworm infection by age................................................................. 152
Figure 4–4 Prevalence of *E. coli* infection by age................................................................. 155
Figure 4–5 A rhabditoid larvae of *Strongyloides stercoralis* from a faecal sample from the village Sika .................................................................................................................. 156
Figure 4–6 Percentage of individuals (n=333) with total number of intestinal parasites detected.................................................................................................................................. 157
Figure 4–7 Household size and the number of households not providing faecal samples 157
Figure 4–8 Percentage of households, with more than one member and in which all members provided a sample, with varying number of members with hookworm ....... 158
Figure 5–1 Graph of the optical density by ELISA using purified glycoproteins to detect antibody for NCC from samples originating from Timor-Leste, PNG and West Papua 184
Figure 6–1 Concentration of serum IgG (µg/ml) to E/S antigens of *N. americanus* post-inoculation .................................................................................................................................. 205
Figure 6–2 Change in specific IgG concentration (µg/ml) over time in patients with CD (Number in bottom left corner patient identification) ........................................................................ 206
Figure 6–3 Change in specific IgG concentration (µg/ml) over time in control subjects (Number in bottom left corner patient identification) ........................................................................ 208
Figure 6–4 Immunoblot of ES products from adult worms of *N. americanus* probed with serum pre- and post-infection and identified for bound IgG ........................................................................ 209
Figure 6–5 Lymphocyte stimulation to the mitogen, PHA (CD+HW, CD, Controls) .............. 210
Figure 6–6 Lymphocyte stimulation to various antigens (CD+HW, CD, Controls) ............... 211
Figure 6–7 Net Interferon-γ production from whole blood stimulated with mitogen and various antigens ....................................................................................................................... 212
Figure 6–8 Net IL-6 production from diluted whole blood stimulated with PHA, crude *B. fragilis* antigen and whole dead *S. cerevisiae* ................................................................................. 212
Figure 6–9 Net IL-10 production from diluted whole blood stimulated with PHA, crude *B. fragilis* antigen and whole dead *S. cerevisiae* ................................................................................. 213
Figure 6–10 Net IL-13 production from diluted whole blood stimulated with PHA, crude *B. fragilis* antigen and whole dead *S. cerevisiae* ................................................................................. 213
Figure 6–11 Net Interferon-γ/Net IL-10 ratio from diluted whole blood stimulated with *S. cerevisiae* .................................................................................................................................. 214
Figure 6–12 Gross production of IFN-γ after stimulation with *B. fragilis* and *S. cerevisiae* in RPMI diluted blood after 48 hr incubation .................................................. 216