

Too many babies without eyes in Irak

Edward De Sutter 26/05/2001

source : Dutch Journal Medical Science

URL : http://www.lai-aib.org/lai/article_lai.phtml?section=A3ABBD&object_id=8857

Irak Depleted Uranium

Source: Nederlands Tijdschrift Geneeskunde, 2001, 26 mei; 145(21), blz.1024

(Dutch Journal Medical Science, 26 May, 2001; 145(21), p.1024)

Iraq: Too many babies without eyes

Mohammed A. Salman, an eye surgeon from Baghdad, is reporting via the internet about the phenomenon anophthalmos: babies who have been born with only one eye or who are missing both eyes. This is a rare anomaly, which normally exists at 1 of the 50 million births. The Iraqi eye doctor, however, is reporting 9 cases in two years; 8 babies are missing both eyes. The Flemish eye doctor Edward De Sutter from the Groeninghe Hospital in Kortrijk picked up the message from internet and started a scientific discussion with Salman per e-mail. On the critical and unbelieving questions from De Sutter, Salman proposed to come and to look by himself. De Sutter accepted the invitation and came to Iraq, together with two other colleague eye doctors. What he saw in Iraq, was horrible, like he writes in the Flemish daily 'De Standaard' (5 May, 2001).

De Sutter examined a number of children by himself which was born without eyes, but also saw some pictures of children with grotesque anomalies, such as the start of one eye in the middle of the face: the so-called cyclops. His colleague Roland Bonneux examined children with an absent crown of the skull who were keeping alive in the incubator. "I am not so much bewildered about the presence of the anomalies as well about the great number out of them", says De Sutter. Out of the 4000 births there are 20 with such anomalies. "Iraq seems to be a scientific curiosity."

The cause is evident according to Salman: from 7 of the 8 anophthalmic babies who missed both eyes, the fathers have been exposed to U.S. antitank weapons during the attack of the U.S. on Iraq in 1991. At this depleted uranium was used. According to the official point of view from the U.S. the radioactive particles, which released during the use of such weapons, pose no danger for the health, but various groups - amongst them participants of the conflicts in Kosovo in 1999 - disputing this.

Leaving all political sensitivities aside it has been clear to De Sutter that Salman needs help. Not only concrete aid of medicines and material, but also aid in the field of scientific knowledge and support. On a special web page of the Association of Eye doctors in Flanders (<http://www.iraqi-child.com>) more is mentioned about the mission of De Sutter to Iraq and the aid program that he and his colleagues want to set up.

Translation by Henk van der Keur

Notes: The web page is Dutch; however also for not Dutch speaking people it is worth to visit. There is a report with pictures.

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