C-402 Haemophilus Influenzae: A Pathogen of Growing Geriatric Importance. Assessment of its Prevalence in an Elderly Hospital Population with a New, Inexpensive Isolation Technique. GUIDO BROICH MD*°, GEORGE TORTORA PhD° and PIETRO DE NICOLA MD¶; °SUNY @ Stony Brook, NY-11794, USA and ¶ Institute of Geriatrics and Gerontology, University of Pavia,I-27100,Italy

Haemophilus species, both encapsulated and unencapsulated strains,have recently gained greater importance in clinical infections in the elderly population, and are the second most frequent cause of pneumonia in the aged. While in the traditional diseases caused by Haemophilus species,the encapsulated Haemophilus influenzae type b is the major pathogen, in the geriatric population other serotypes and also non encapsulated, non typable strains are found in large numbers. For this reason testing only for the presence of the b capsular antigen may be insufficient.Taking advantage of a simple isolation technique developed by us and described elswere in this meeting, we examined 100 throat swabs from patients over 55 years of age for the presence of Haemophilus species.Corresponding data were obtained previously with the same method from a control group of 300 patients with a median age of 19 years. With this method we found that 57% of the elderly and 67% of the younger patients were carriers of Haemophilus. 31% of the aged and 40% of the younger subjects harbored Haemophilus influenzae These values showed no clinically significant difference betweeen the two age groups. It is however the aged patient in which organisms other than H.influenzae type b express a significant pathogenicity. This suggests that host factors play a primary role in the infection.The technique utilized in the study allows to readily isolate the offending organism in pure cultures,which so can be subjected to standard antibiotic sensitivity tests.

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