

The Editors

François Malaisse

François Malaisse, born in Antwerp (Belgium) in 1934, is Agricultural Engineer (Water and Forests) of Gembloux Agricultural University (1956), Master in Science (Botany) of Brussels Free University (1960) and obtains a Ph. D. in Botany at the Official University of Congo, Lubumbashi (1968). He was Professor of several Universities in D.R. Congo, Belgium (Gembloux Agricultural University, Brussels Free University, Mons-Hainaut University, Tropical Medicine Institute Prince Leopold) and Italy (Pollenzo University of Gastronomic Sciences). He is member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences. Its research concerns ecology, plant systematic and ethnoecology mostly in overseas countries of Africa. He carried out 8 surveys in Tibet Autonomous Region since 1998. He has published or edited a tenth of books and more than 300 papers and parts of books.

Françoise Mathieu

Françoise Mathieu, born in Belgium in 1960, is Bachelor in Physical Therapy (1982) and holds a Ph.D. in Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation (2001) from Brussels Free University (ULB). The subject of her thesis was «Kashin-Beck Disease (KBD): Clinical Features, X-rays Aspects and Clinical Trial of a Physical Therapy Treatment in Central Tibet». She studied also Tropical Medicine (1986) at the Tropical Medicine Institute Prince Leopold, Antwerp (Belgium); Methodology and Practice in Epidemiology (2003) and Medical Statistics (2005) at the University of Bordeaux – France.

She joined Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in 1986 and worked in several countries and contexts until 2002. The last 10 years (1992 – 2002), Dr. Mathieu managed the KBD projects for MSF. Within this context, she was living permanently in Tibet Autonomous Region from 1992 till 1998.

In 2002, together with 3 colleagues, she created the non-profit organization «Kashin-Beck Disease asbl-vzw» which is registered in Belgium. She was president of the board of directors for the last 6 years. At present, she is still directing the different projects that the organization is implementing in Tibet Autonomous Region (P.R. China). Every year, she is paying several visits to Tibet Autonomous Region.

She had published several papers about the Kashin-Beck disease.



Summary

Kashin-Beck disease is probably one of the most neglected diseases. It occurs in only a very limited part of the world, in a crescent shape area situated from South East Siberia to North West China. It affects mainly the rural population of these remote regions and more specifically the children. They are suffering from a lot of joint pain and lose their mobility. They stop to grow properly and they became severely handicapped.

Since more than 15 years, an international team together with his partner, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention of Tibet Autonomous Region, are studying this disease with, sometimes, very limited means but always in a marvellous environment. Their daily workmates are the lovely children, the yaks and other animals of the Himalaya region as well as the unique variety of flowers and plants, under the beautiful shadow of some of the highest peaks of the world.

Their unique multidisciplinary approach of the complex issue of the Kashin-Beck disease is done with a constant worry of a better knowledge of the environment and its population.

Through a lot of beautiful pictures and some more scientific data, the authors, with an immoderate enthusiasm, will drive you along the valleys of the high Tibetan plateau and will accompany you for a visit from one village to another to meet these patients and understand the difficulties of their daily life.

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Big Bone Disease

A multidisciplinary approach of Kashin-Beck disease in Tibet Autonomous Region (P.R. China)



François Malaisse and Françoise Mathieu

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