Ciguatera fish poisoning receives very little recognition in Solomon Islands. There is no organised research or monitoring of ciguatera fish poisoning carried out in Solomon Islands as yet, so as to determine the current status of the problem and there are other major health problems such as malaria to worry about.

Though there have not been any confirmed cases of ciguatera fish poisoning in the Solomon Islands as yet, from traditional knowledge and anecdotal information on case histories, fish poisoning which was probably ciguatera has occurred in certain areas. These are restricted to reefs, atolls and small islands. No cases of ciguatera fish poisoning appear to have occurred on any of the major islands in the Solomon Islands.

Fish species which are considered ciguatoxic in the Solomon Islands include:

— Lutjanus bohar
— Lutjanus sebae
— Sphyraena barracuda
— Symphorichthys spirilus*
— Platax teira.

It is believed that some people have traditional medicine for treating ciguatoxin-intoxicated patients.

Apart from the regulation imposed by the Provincial Government of Temotu Province, which prohibits sale of fish species considered ciguatoxic in the province, there is no law or regulation concerning ciguatera poisoning in Solomon Islands.

Ciguatera fish poisoning is as yet not a major health problem in Solomon Islands. It is therefore not clear at this stage as who should take responsibility for dealing with ciguatera issues. It does, however, threaten coastal fisheries development and thus perhaps should principally be regarded as a fisheries problem. For further information on ciguatera in the Solomons please contact the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division, P.O. Box G24, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Ciguatera in Fiji

In Fiji, cases of ciguatera have increased significantly in the last decade. In 1989, 1990 and 1991 the number of cases attended by government medical authorities were 683, 787 and 1,012 respectively. Some people call these figures alarming because innocent people are victims of intoxication and the inability of fisheries science to address the problem which has occurred for quite some time. Ciguatera poisoning is seen as an unnecessary obstacle in coastal fisheries development.

Ciguatera in Fiji causes many symptoms in humans, depending on the dosage received. These include gastrointestinal (diarrhoea, pain, nausea), neurological and cardiovascular disturbance. Symptoms begin a few hours after eating the fish and can last for days and months. After recovering from a bout of ciguatera poisoning, the symptoms can be brought on again after eating more fish, even if those fish would not harm another person.

There is no cure for ciguatera poisoning yet and treatment is symptomatic only. Aspirins and Panadol tablets are used as painkillers, Phanagon tablets and Stemetil injections for vomiting, and patients with diarrhoea, vomiting and dehydration are treated with intravenous fluids (only patients with these serious symptoms are admitted to hos-
Doctors claim ciguatera poisoning is not fatal and the disease is not morbid. As a result the problem of ciguatera is left in the hands of fisheries scientists.

It is difficult to advise people in Fiji how to avoid ciguatera poisoning because it is so sporadic. Some fish are more prone to cause ciguatera than others, especially at certain times of the year or in certain areas. However, Island peoples have known about ciguatera poisoning for centuries and local communities usually know which fish to avoid at which time of the year. The best way to avoid ciguatera poisoning is to seek the advice of the people living in the area. Ciguatera intoxication has increased recently due to movement of fish to larger urban centres where people are not able to use local knowledge for guidance.

There is a sudden increase in ciguatera during the months of October and November, when the balolo rises. It is not yet known whether balolo is directly responsible or if it is the associated factors that are responsible for this increase.

It is very difficult to screen for proneness ciguatera unless a reliable test is developed. At the moment the only real way of ascertaining such areas is through cases of poisoning. Many cases are not reported to the medical authorities and mild cases are often misdiagnosed.

Ciguatera fish poisoning in Fiji is confined to carnivorous reef fish. The larger specimens are more likely to be toxic, probably through accumulation of ciguatoxin over a long period or having taken in a large amount at one time i.e. at the time of the balolo spawning.

Most common species of fish implicated in ciguatera are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fijian name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bati damu</td>
<td>Lutjanus bohar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dokonivudi</td>
<td>Lethrinus miniatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogo</td>
<td>Sphyraena barracuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dabea</td>
<td>Gymnothorax undatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donu</td>
<td>Variola louti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regua</td>
<td>Lutjanus rivulatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delabulewa</td>
<td>Epinephelus fuscoguttatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumusumu</td>
<td>Arothron stellatus*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(*Note from the editor: in this case, it’s tetraodontid poisoning)

The Cook Islands are 15 islands situated about 3,000 miles north-east of New Zealand. The Polynesian inhabitants number about 18,000 and are closely related to the Tahitians.

The Cook Islands are scattered over 2 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. There are two distinct groups, the northern group made up of Penrhyn, Pukapuka, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Nassau and Suwarrow, which are all atoll islands with the exception of Nassau. The southern group consists of two atolls, Palmerston and Manuae, and 7 islands, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mangaia, Mititaro and Takutea.

The traditional basic food in the islands consists of fish and taro, although on the main island of Rarotonga these foods are mixed with additional locally grown vegetables and fruit as well as imported foods.

There are no large ocean-going fishing boats belonging to the Cook Islands that could catch fish on long lines or with nets. Only small amounts of fish are caught in the southern group, which has tiny lagoons and virtually no continental shelf, while in the northern group, with less population, there are still plenty of ocean fish as well as reef and lagoon fish available.

Ciguatera fish poisoning is hardly any problem in the northern group of the Cook Islands. There have been only a few cases reported. However, the people are cautious and do not eat the Napoleon wrasse (Maratea) in Penrhyn. Two serious ciguatera poisoning cases occurred in Rarotonga from a large red snapper (Anga-mea) that was brought over from Penrhyn.

In the northern group very few vegetables are grown. Only on the atolls are fish still foremost in the diet. Most of the people are good fishermen and like to paddle out with small outrigger canoes. They will put 3 or 4 lines down to about 150 m or go trolling outside the reef with small aluminium boats and outboard engines. They mainly catch tuna, bonito, barracuda, wahoo and dolphin fish. There has been no ciguatera from these fish in the Cook Islands to-date. In the northern group few people go net fishing in the reef passages or in the lagoon.