Name_____

Sleeping Sickness

Sleeping sickness is a disease caused by a single-celled parasite that attacks other animals. This deadly parasite known as a trypanosome attacks humans and other vertebrates, or animals with backbones. The sickness attacks the nervous system of the affected animal. Currently, this unusual disease is only in Africa. The disease is spread by the African tsetse fly. This insect lives on the lake shores and riverbanks in Africa. The fly becomes infected by feeding on the blood of an already infected victim. The trypanosome is in the infected blood consumed by the fly. Once the fly is infected, it can carry the disease to other creatures.

What happens to a victim of sleeping sickness? Fever, headache, and chills are all symptoms of the disease. The infected victim will also have swelling of the lymph nodes, a skin rash, and severe weakness. The attack on the victim's central nervous system can eventually lead to extensive sleeping, and in some cases, a coma and even death.

How can doctors detect this disease? Blood work from an infected victim will show the existence of trypanosomes in the blood. Since the trypanosomes affect the nervous system of their victims, early detection and treatment is critical. Early treatments show a strong success rate with regard to recovery. Unfortunately, if the disease is caught later, the treatments are not as effective, and the trypanosomes often become resistant to the drug used to treat the disease.

Text Questions

1. Where could a person find out more information about sleeping sickness?
   a. a tourist's guidebook to Africa
   b. an atlas with extensive maps of Africa
   c. a book about diseases indigenous to Africa
   d. a website about sleeping disorders

2. What are three symptoms of sleeping sickness?
   a. skin rash, nausea, fever
   b. headache, fever, swelling of the esophagus
   c. nausea, skin rash, severe weakness
   d. headache, chills, skin rash

3. Using information from the text, what can one infer about sleeping sickness?
   a. There is the possibility of sleeping sickness becoming a pandemic.
   b. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has no known cure for sleeping sickness.
   c. Sleeping sickness is found only in Africa because the insect that carries the disease only lives on this continent.
   d. Better tests are needed to correctly diagnose sleeping sickness.

4. Think of another disease that is carried by animals, and write one or two complete sentences comparing and/or contrasting the disease to sleeping sickness.

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5. Which statement is accurate about the tsetse fly?
   a. The fly spreads the disease by carrying germs through the air as it flies.
   b. The fly becomes infected by feeding on the blood of animals that are already infected.
   c. The fly carries the disease from one continent to another.
   d. The fly's bite causes the sleeping sickness to spread only to humans.

LIVEWORKSHEETS