

xxx (date deleted) xxx

Dear Professor Upton,

I am writing you because I am feeling sick and think that it may be due to a parasitic infection. You do not know me. I am a student now at xxxxxxxx College in a suburb of xxxxxxxx. I was searching the internet for parasitic infections related to centipedes and I found your page which was your fall semester lecture not outline for your Biology 265 Animal Parasitology Course dated from September 24, 1999. The page is talking about the nematomorpha phylum. You state on this page that centipedes can be a host for these animals. The reason that I am concerned with parasitic infections concerning centipedes is because I had killed a centipede in my room last monday. My room is very dirty since I had not cleaned it all semester and smelled of accumulating garbage and pizza and chinese food boxes since my roommate who left took her fridge with her. The looked a little disfigured and as if it were dying since it fell off my wall by itself. Unfortunately I immediately flushed this bug as I do with most insects. A couple hours later I found a part of the body of this bug on my bed, which is in the opposite corner of my room. I was shocked since I did not go toward that area of my room when I went to the bathroom to flush the centipede down the toilet. I also immediately flushed this part of the bug down the toilet. I also saw what looked to be small bluish-white or slightly grey lint balls on my bed. I did not think much of them at first, and simply tried brushing some of them onto the floor since the comforter of my bed is also blue, and so I assumed them to be part of my comforter. I also found a type of whitish looking powder on my comforter. I tasted some of it and it tasted very bitter and fowel and maybe insect-like and I immediately tried gargling my mouth and my throat several times to get rid of any of this powder. Thinking about it now, this powder may have been eggs or discharge from the centipde. I then went on and slept for the night. When I woke up the next morning I felt very itchy and felt little things moving around on my body. Unfortunately, I did not shower that day since I had a test that morning and alot of classes and rehearsal during the rest of the day so I was too busy. That night I slept in my same bed with the same comforter and sheets and woke up the next morning feeling even more itchy and felt more tiny things crawling on my body. I am sorry that this story is a bit gross and disturbing but I feel it necessary to tell it. I found small black things that looked like tiny dead worms on my sheets. I immediately took a shower and spent two and a half hours trying to kill what was on me by scrubbing myself and standing under very hot water. I also found a couple small blue balls that looked like lint like the ones I had noticed two days before on my comforter in my pubic hair. I probably should have saved these but I was so terrified from them that I rinsed them down my drain. The outer bluish-white lint, which appeared to be a type of cacoon or shell, disappeared and practically melted when it came into contact with the shower water and melted to reveal a tiny black thing that looked sort of like a tiny black bug inside. The bug seemed to be very tiny, no bigger than a few millimeters, and it looked like it had legs coming off of it. The lint on the outside of this bug or what appeared to be a cacoon turned opaque and practically dissolved when water was poured on it to reveal this bug. I also felt as if the center of this itchiness was originating from my anus and my urinal holes, as if these tiny bugs had gone up those holes. I visited the school nurse practitioner that morning and she checked my skin and the hair on my head and my skin and said that I had no bug marks or eggs from scabies or lice and that everything was ok, and after looking at the cacooned bugs under her magnifying glass that I had tried to collect that she could not tell what they were. I showed her a couple very small clearish and slightly hard marks that had developed on my skin but she dismissed them and said that they could be warts or something else. I also showed her the marks that had developed on my back that also felt hard, and she said it could have been anything and just looked like irritation. The doctor on duty also said this and said that the egg-like things that I had shown the nurse were not eggs either. They told me that I was possibly having an allergic reaction from some type of mold since I had not cleaned my room all semester and that I should simply clean my room and take some benadryl, but I was almost positive that it was not an allergic reaction since I have had allergic reactions on my skin from animals and my skin was not pink at all and I felt small things crawling on me. Unfortunately the nurse and doctor who works at my college do not spend as much time listening to their patients as I think they should in my opinion. My stomach and intestinal system has felt sick all week, especially my intestinal system. My intestinal system has felt like things were moving in it, practically as if bugs were hatching inside of me the night after I found them on my bed. I have had a burping/vomiting sensation for the past couple of days, especially when I wake up, practically like I have morning sickness. I also have had bad intestinal problems, and have felt as if my intestines were pulsating and as if they were moving. My intestines have stopped moving as much, but I still feel a continuous pulsing in them and I have started to feel more of sharp pains. I also

feel as if my body is giving off heat from time to time, like there is this burning sensation inside my body practically like I have been poisoned causing my body to give off heat. I was very concerned and went to the emergency room the other day but the doctor there simply concluded that I had a very upset stomach caused by stress and that I had just imagined the bugs on me and that I simply needed to clean my room and relax and concentrate on my school studies and he told me to simply take some zantac which you can buy over-the-counter for stomach acid problems. I then took some pepsid AC at the hospital which is the same thing as zantac and felt a little better after a while but simply had an increased burping/vomiting sensation at first. This is a little gross also but I feel as if I have to explain the whole story so please excuse me, but I also felt gas passing through my vaginal whole. I think that possibly these bugs went up my vaginal whole, urinal whole, and my rectal whole, and may be hosting on my whole digestive system now and also possibly in my uterus. I am sure that all of this sounds very far fetched and unbelievable, but I really do not feel better from what the doctor told me and know that I felt things on me and that everything that I've said so far in this letter are true. There were a few things that made me immediately think that I was infected with nematomorpha upon reading your lecture page. You mention that nematomorpha hatch into worms out of their outer shell or I believe you termed it host, and that this occurs when it comes into contact with water, which is what happened to the eggs that I found and that were on my body. When I put them under water, the outer shell disappeared and the the black bug inside was revealed. You also said that intermediate hosts could be involved in order for the bugs to infect terrestrial anthropods. I am not sure but are dogs, and humans included in anthropods, I haven't taken biology since the 9th grade, actually anthropods are more crab-like animals aren't they? It is at all possible through some bizaree circumstance that these bugs infected my system by going up my vaginal, rectal, and urinal holes and infected my intestinal system? I am not a science student myself so I could not totally understand all of the vocabulary you used to describe the process. I am thinking that possibly the centipede was the intermediary host which dispersed the eggs onto my bed. You said that these eggs usually castrate the host, and I found some part of a centipede's appendage on my bed, although it looked more like a leg than the bug's penis since it was long and jointed. I also think that the bugs may have had some lobes on their posteriors as you said. They just sort of seemed to have loops ejecting from their bodies. Some of them seemed to have more round lobes jutting out, while i think some seemed to have a longer, pointed thin body with loops only on one end. These worms did seem to look black though even though you said yellowish to dark brown, but I think that the worm that I saw on my bed had blunt and rounded ends like you said they did in contrast to nematodes that you wrote taper at both ends. Is it also possible for nematodes to infect humans or infect hosts through animals such as centipedes? You also wrote that for males the tales were ventrically coiled, and I don't know what ventrically means but could that mean just a few loops at the end or loops all around sort of like a spider? And when you said that they castrate the host, after migrating to body cavities or fat bodies, in the process of developing into a subadult, could that possibly mean that they would move up my anal, urinal, and vaginal cavities and then I suppose burst out of my intestinal system and move all over my body? I am very scared that this could be true since right now I am simply feeling strange sharp pains in my lower intestines and it feels as if they are practically being killed and I feel a slightly bloody taste in my throat. Please respond back to me immediately since I am scared for my life and do not know who to turn to since the ER internal medicine doctor and the doctor and nurse at my school all just said that I was imagining things and I am positive that I was and is still not and since I don't think that any infectious disease doctors are in emergency rooms on sundays and I contacted an infectious disease doctor today through an answering and paging service at a clinic today, and the doctor said that she had never even heard of horse worms but that she would give me containers to take a stool sample. Please explain what ventrally coiled, areole, intrareolar bristles, crossing gut wall, and encysting and excysting mean. Does encysting mean to develop it's exterior cacoon while excysting means to go out of the shell and develop into the worm? Please answer me immediately and tell me any sources of information that may help me and any specialist doctors or organizations that may deal with these issues that you know of. I would like it if you could call me at my dorm instead of writing e-mail since I am very worried. My number in my dorm is xxxxxxxxxx. Thank you very much and God Bless You.

Yours Truly,

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