

Anthropology 208: Medical Anthropology

Semester 1, 2020

Week 1, Class 2

Reading: Cultural Meanings of Oral Rehydration Salts in
Jamaica

We're looking for Class Reps

Nominate yourself today and get:

An important and recognised addition to your resume /
Improve your leadership skill set / Ability to make
significant changes to your education / End of Year Function /
At the end of the semester, you will be eligible to receive
a class rep certificate provided you have registered with AUSA.

NB: The deadline to register your details is Friday of week two.

Responsibilities:

Elicit feedback from your classmates /
Attend department and faculty meetings /
Help resolve issues that may arise in your
class.

For more info visit www.ausa.org.nz/support/class-reps/
email classreps@ausa.org.nz or speak to your lecturer

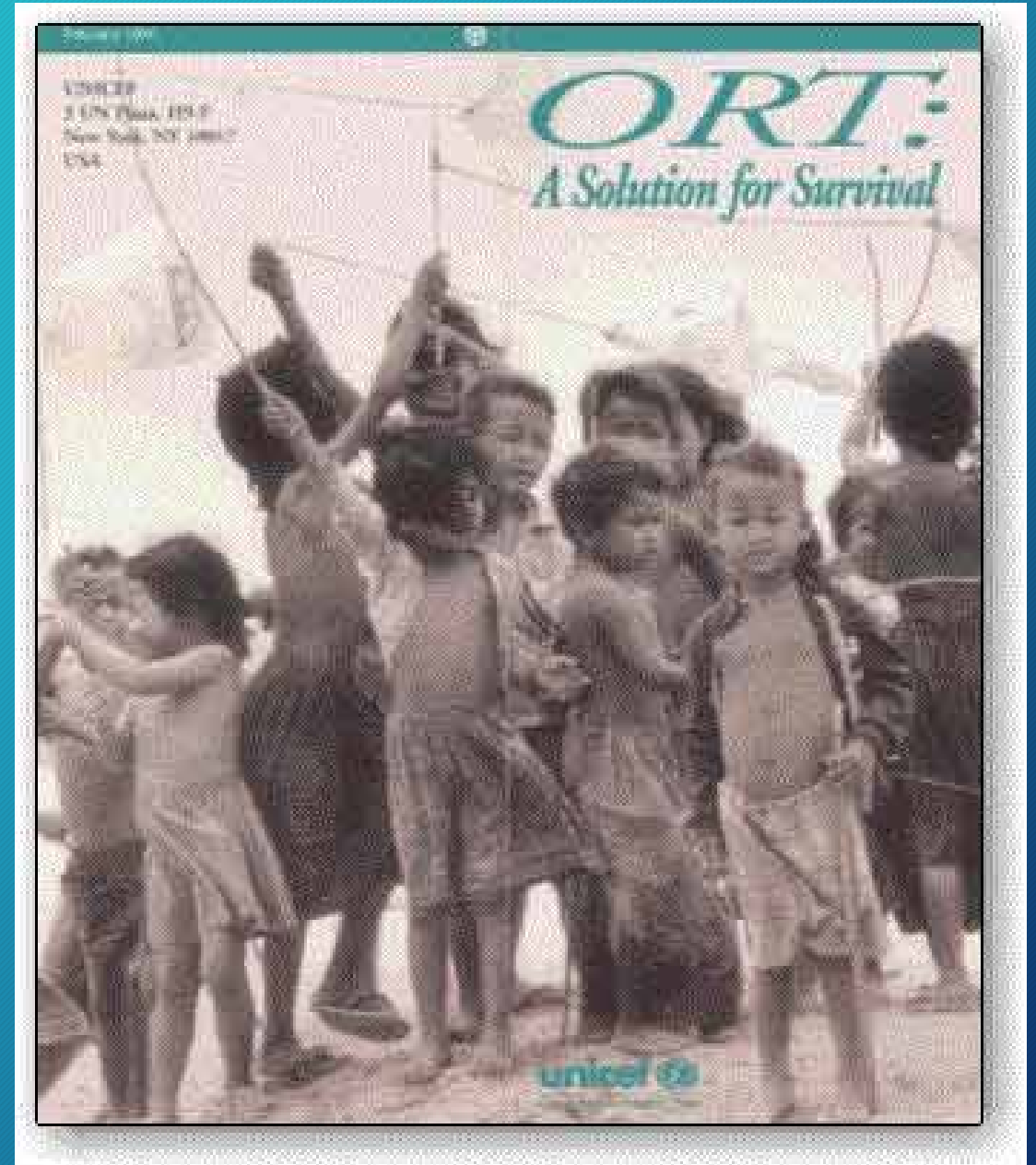


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Oral Rehydration Therapy (Maccormack and Draper)



ORT in Jamaica

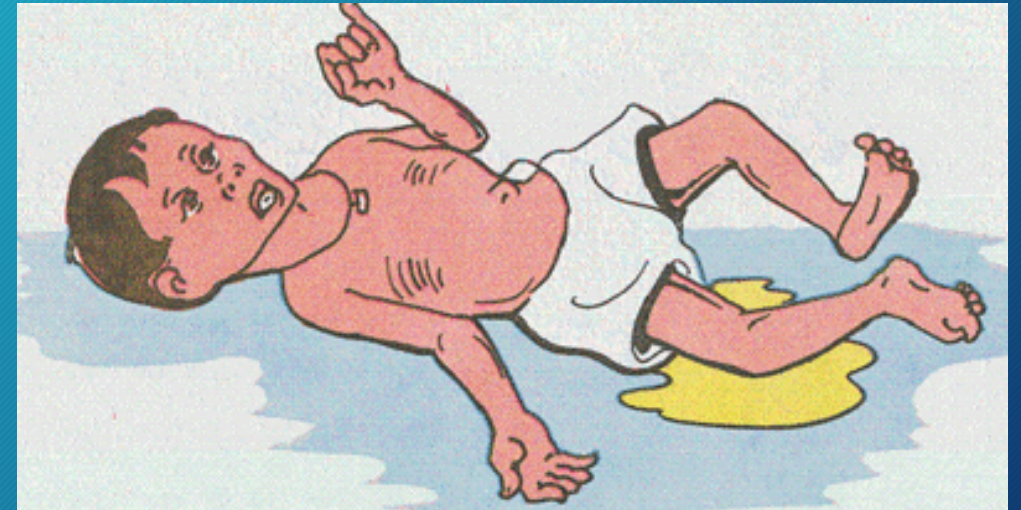


When and why do children get diarrhea?

Understanding childhood diarrhea

- Diarrhea common (2-3 episodes/child/year)
- Particularly among weanlings
- Acute vs chronic diarrhea

(Biocultural interactions throughout human evolution and history have shaped patterns of health and disease)

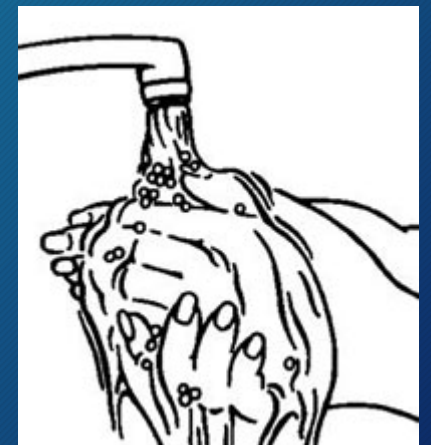


What settings make diarrhea more likely and more threatening.?

Settings for childhood diarrhea

- Low-birth weight babies
- Breastfeeding possibly helps prevention
- Healthy water supply
- Unsafe food supply

(Human bodies are embedded, created in and help produce contexts: physical, social and political, each of which has historical antecedents.)



What are local responses to diarrhea –
local cures?

Responses in Jamaica to diarrhea

- Coconut water
- Fruit juice or fruit syrup and water
- Mint tea
- Glucose and water
- But salt water?

(Medical pluralism is the norm)



What understandings do people hold of
diarrhea?

What sort of understandings do people hold?

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- A healthy body needs matter to flow freely (constipation a greater concern than diarrhea)
- Food comes in too fast (e.g. teething water)
- Notions of dirt and germs
- So traditionally two-stage cure: a wash out and then plenty of liquid and food (mint tea, coconut water)

(Cultural premises shape the health-related knowledge and practice of everyday life; what constitutes human life, health, disease are not everywhere assessed or thought of in the same way)

Why is salt substituted for ORT?

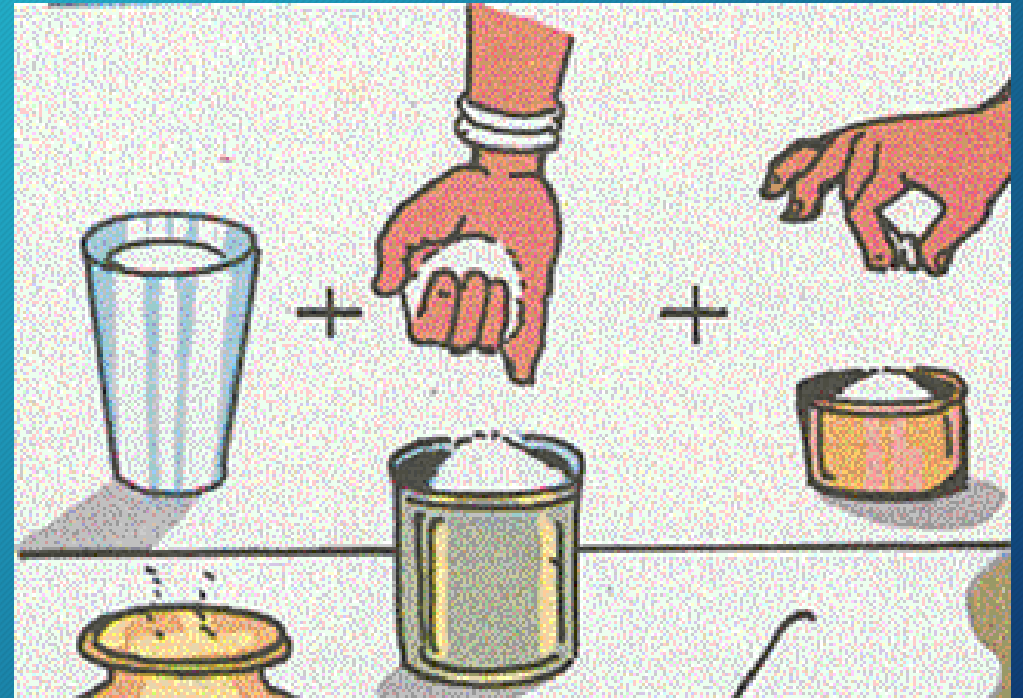
So why salt?

- Well, oral rehydration *salts*
- ORS as laxative salts (clean out) plus feeds child
- Substitution of Epsom salts (rational economic decision)
- Power of medicine and professional status
- But also the economics of aid (packaged, centralised)

(Medicine and medical systems are thoroughly social and political endeavours)

But what about elsewhere?

- A glass of water, a pinch of salt and a fist of sugar
- "In spite of our knowledge, an enormous gap still exists - 25 years after its discovery - between the availability of ORS and its actual application."
- *UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant*



4 premises:

- Cultural premises shape the health-related knowledge and practice of everyday life
- Biocultural interactions throughout human evolution and history have shaped patterns of health and disease
- Disease patterns, social norms and socioeconomic arrangements are intricately interrelated.
- Anthropology has broad temporal and geographical scope, biocultural perspectives, qualitative and quantitative methods and a multi-layered approach.

Class exercise (writing, revising, improving)

- Based on your reading, write a 3-5 sentence paragraph explaining how their study is an example of the interaction between people's health practices, cultural understandings of illness, power and economic relationships, and the biology of young children.
- Use specific examples (data) in your answer.

(6 minutes)



Class exercise (writing, revising, improving)

- NOW: in pairs read each other's paragraph (1 minute)
- DISCUSS how to make both better (4 minutes)
 - (DON'T WASTE TIME SAYING THINGS LIKE 'YOURS IS MUCH BETTER THAN MINE' - ALL WRITING IMPROVES 2ND TIME AROUND)
- REDRAFT your 5 sentences, put your name on them and hand in to me (10 minutes)

