

Fatal Laughter (kuru)

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Introduction

The last century, during the fifties and sixties, a disease appeared in the fore population in the highlands of New Guinea, a disease called (fatal laughter) known scientifically as (kuru). The highest prevalence rate occurred in (1968, 1975) and it is a rare and fatal disease that affects the nervous system.

Definition

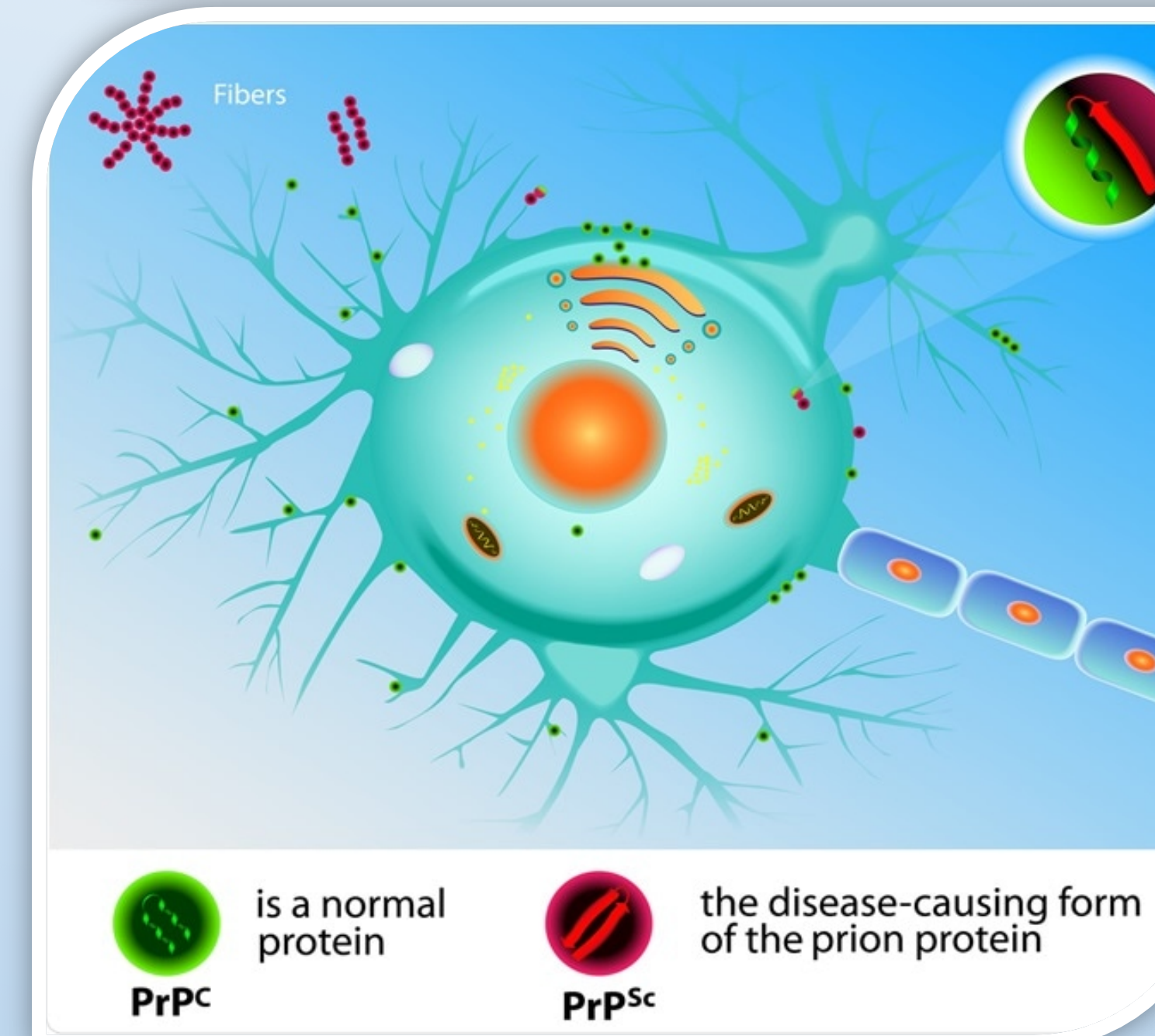
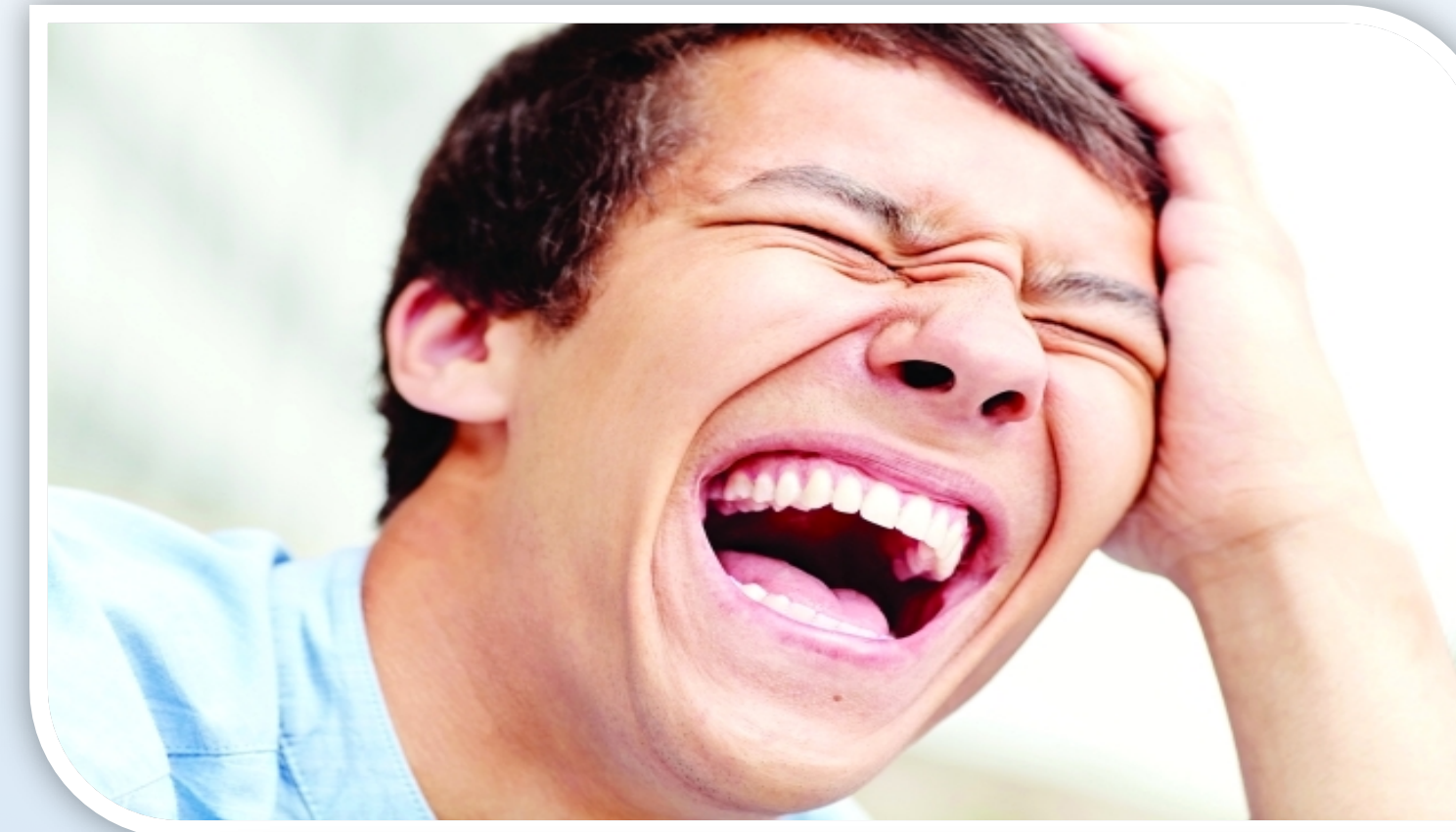
The name kuru meaning (shivering) disease was a result of the practice of cannibalism. Coro belongs to the category of infectious diseases, (TSE) Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy. Also known as prion disease, it was the first neurodegenerative disease caused by an infectious agent.

Causes and Mechanism

It was previously thought that the cause of kuru was a slow virus, but experts now believe that the cause is a small protein molecule called a prion that looks similar to (BSE) Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Prions are proteins that are folded in a wrong way, which is not a problem except for our bodies being very difficult to destroy.

These unhealthy proteins accumulate in the brain and cause holes to form, which in turn destroy nerve cells, and the disease progresses to the eventual death of the affected person.



Symptoms

People with this disease enter a coma within 6 to 12 months after the first symptoms appear.

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1- Muscle twitching and tremors | 5- Slurred speech |
| 2- Inability to grasp objects | 6- Difficulty swallowing |
| 3- Hysterical laughter | 7- Poor coordination |
| 4- Moodiness and behavioral changes | 8- Difficulty walking |

Treatment

There is no available treatment.

Summary

Kuru disease is also called (fatal laughter). The name kuru (shivering) disease was a result of the practice of cannibalism.

The Causes and mechanism of kuru was a small protein molecule called a prion. The symptoms of this disease includes muscle twitching and tremors. There is no treatment for his disease till now.

References

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