etymology

**Leptospira** [lep′to-spi′ra]  
From the Greek *leptos* (slender) and *speira* (coil), a genus of bacteria consisting of single, finely coiled, motile, aerobic cells. In 1886, German physician Adolf Weil described a clinical syndrome characterized by splenomegaly, jaundice, and nephritis, although the disease was likely recognized in ancient China as an occupational hazard of rice farming. The organism was first described in 1907 by Arthur Stimson, who observed spirochetes with curved ends in the kidneys of a patient thought to have died of yellow fever. He named it *Spirochaeta interrogaens* because it looked like a question mark.

**Sources**


Address for correspondence: Ronnie Henry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1600 Clifton Rd NE, Mailstop E03, Atlanta, GA 30333, USA; email: boq3@cdc.gov

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid1903.AD1903