Chronic Chagasic Cardiopathy in Amazon Region: An Etiology to Remember

João Marcos Bemfica Barbosa Ferreira¹, Jorge Augusto de Oliveira Guerra²,³, Belisa Maria Lopes Magalhães³, Leila I. A. R. C. Coelho², Marcel Gonçalves Maciel³, Maria das Graças Vale Barbosa²,³

Hospital Universitário Francisca Mendes (UFAM)²; Fundação de Medicina Tropical do Amazonas²; Universidade do Estado do Amazonas³, Manaus, AM – Brasil

Summary
This study assessed the frequency of chronic chagasic cardiopathy (CCC) in 37 autochthonous patients from Amazon region with left ventricular systolic dysfunction of undefined etiology. Three cases were diagnosed in the studied sample, with an 8.1% frequency.

Introduction
The Amazon region has been considered a low-risk area for Chagas Disease (CD) for many years. Recently, the diagnosis of acute as much as chronic cases has been frequent in the region². However, there are reports of only five chronic cases with dilated cardiomyopathy of chagasic etiology in autochthonous people from Amazon region²,³.

There are no studies that evaluate the CD frequency in patients with dilated cardiomyopathy in Amazon region. In other areas, CD responds for a significant portion of the cases. However, this etiology is rarely remembered among autochthonous patients from Amazon region, thus not being performed the serology for Trypanosoma cruzi, which may underestimate the disease diagnosis.

The objective of this study was to assess the frequency of chronic chagasic cardiopathy (CCC) in autochthonous patients from Amazon region with dilated cardiomyopathy and left ventricular systolic dysfunction of undefined etiology.

Methods
Prospective and transversal study that assessed 37 patients submitted to transthoracic echocardiogram in the period between 2007 July and December at Francisca Mendes University hospital from Amazonas, Brazil.

Results
During the study period, 2,039 transthoracic echocardiograms were carried out, and 196 patients presented ejection fraction of left ventricle (LV) ≤ 45%.

After the assessment of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 37 patients were included in the study (mean age of 62.9 years old, 81% males). Mean ejection fraction of LV was 29.4%.

Patients’ naturalness was: 43.2% from the Amazonas countryside; 35.1% from Manaus municipality (AM); 13.5% from Pará; 5.4% from Maranhão and 2.7% from Acre.
The indirect immunofluorescence was reagent in eight cases (21.6%), ELISA in two cases (5.4%) and Western-Blot in three cases (8.1%).

Three patients were diagnosed with CCC, with a frequency 8.1% in the whole studied sample.

Data from positive CCC patients are described in Table 1.

### Discussion

Amazon region is considered a hypoendemic area for CD. Acute cases have been occurring in an isolate way or in outbreaks, with approximately 440 reported cases in the region. With regard to chronic cases, seropositivity rate ranges from 1 to 3%, with higher risk in certain subregions.

One of these subregions is Barcelos municipality, placed at the Rio Negro microregion. In this area, transmission related to piassaba fibers extraction was reported. Three investigations carried out between 1991 and 1997 and comprising 2,254 individuals from Barcelos have showed a 2.8 to 5% prevalence of confirmed positive serology by means of recombining ELISA and Western Blot.

With regard to the etiologic agent, the *T. cruzi* from zimodem 1, zimodem 3 or hybrid Z1/Z3 groups has been described. These strains are different from those found in Brazilian endemic zones, where zimodem 2 is predominant. The pathogenicity of Amazon region strains are not totally known; however, it is believed that they cause a low morbidity, probably lower than the morbidity found in endemic areas.

Despite that, two fatal cases of dilated cardiomyopathy and three cases that presented echocardiographic alterations typical of CD in patients with chronic chagasic infection reported in Barcelos.

The epidemiological history of two patients was compatible with CD. The first patient worked for three years with piassaba extraction in Barcelos municipality. The second patient lives in the Tarumã-Mirim settlement, in Manaus, and worked for 12 years at a rubber plantation in Rio Purus (Figure 1). In these three localizations, the presence of infected vectors, sylvan reservoirs and human infection cases was reported.

The third patient was from Iranduba, where there is no register of studies related to CD. It is important to emphasize that the three mentioned patients were from municipalities of the Amazonas countryside.

### Conclusion

The present study suggests that CD is a significant etiology of dilated cardiomyopathy in the Amazon region, and its investigation in autochthonus patients is important. However, studies with bigger samples are necessary, as to know better the importance of CD as etiology of cardiopathies in Amazon region.

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### Potential Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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### Study Association

This study is not associated with any post-graduation program.
Figure 1 – Electrocardiogram of Patient 2 showing left bundle branch block pattern.

References


