

URBAN AMERICAN CUTANEOUS LEISHMANIASIS IN THE METROPOLITAN REGION OF BELO HORIZONTE, MINAS GERAIS STATE, BRAZIL

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American Cutaneous Leishmaniasis (ACL) is classically accepted as a zoonosis transmitted by phlebotominae sandflies, affecting sylvatic mammalian hosts, mainly small rodents of tropical forests. Human infection, generally accidental, takes place in the forests, people being affected when in contact with these environments, when developing activities such as military training, recreation or agricultural exploitation. However, in the last two decades, the disease has been observed in predominantly settled agricultural areas, where forests were cleared away a long time ago (W. Mayrink et al., 1979, *Ann. Trop. Med. Parasitol.*, 73: 123-137), and in some areas of residual forest or agricultural exploitation (O. P. Forattini et al., 1976, *Rev. Saúde públ.*, 10: 31-43). An outbreak of ACL was observed in a periurban area of Rio de Janeiro city, Brazil, where the presence of infected domestic animals was common and the sandflies were found inside houses and outdoors closed to the houses (M. P. Oliveira Neto et al., 1988, *Mem. Inst. Oswaldo Cruz*, 83: 427-435). In Venezuela, the occupation of periurban areas by peasants, with the destruction of woodland areas, is responsible for periurban outbreaks of the disease (J. V. Scorza, 1985, *Bol. Dir. Malariol. San. Amb.*, 25: 45-48).

Since 1987, cases of ACL proceeding from the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (MRBH) have been registered by SUCAM (Superintendência de Campanhas de Saúde Pública) and by the Minas Gerais State Office for Public Health. Intending to study the clinical and epidemiological aspects of the ACL in Minas Gerais State, a reference ambulatory was created in the René Rachou Research Center, where the patients have been assisted. Twenty-

two patients that acquired the disease in 1987 or 1988, residing in the MRBH at the time of disease, were interviewed. Information was obtained about place and time of residence, recent travel, contact with natural foci and the reason for this contact.

Twelve patients acquired the disease away from home: five reported farming activities, one was a prospector in an endemic area and six have fished in natural foci. The other ten patients denied travel or professional activities in other cities, all living in the cities of the MRBH (Table) for at least two years before the onset of the disease.

TABLE

Cities of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte

Cities	District
1 - Belo Horizonte ^a	Venda Nova ^a
2 - Betim	
3 - Caeté	Antônio dos Santos Morro Vermelho Penedia Roças Novas
4 - Contagem	Parque Industrial
5 - Lagoa Santa	Confins Lapinha
6 - Nova Lima	
7 - Pedro Leopoldo	Doutor Lund Fidalgo Vera Cruz de Minas
8 - Raposos*	
9 - Ribeirão das Neves	Justinópolis
10 - Rio Acima*	
11 - Sabará*	General Carneiro ^a Carvalho Brito Mestre Caetano Ravena
12 - Santa Luzia	São Benedito
13 - Vespasiano	São José da Lapa

In Belo Horizonte city three cases of ACL were found: a four-year old child who lived in a slum, a thirty-year old man who lived in the eastern side of the city (Boa Vista suburb) and a fourteen-year old boy from Venda Nova district. Three cases were found in the same street at Sabará town as well as two cases in brothers of four and nine years old from Rio Acima town and two cases of ACL occurring in housewives living in the central area of Raposos town.

All the ten cases proceeding from the MRBH presented few cutaneous lesions in the exposed

areas of the body and had in common, the fact of living in urban areas near small parks, with some kind of contact with these areas.

These are the first cases of ACL described in this area of Minas Gerais State. Presently, a more detailed epidemiological investigation is being performed in some of these areas.

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