Epidemiology

PO - (8505) - LEISHMANIASIS IN ANGOLA- AN EMERGING DISEASE?

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**Background:** Poverty, lack of resources, and inadequate treatments and control programs, exacerbate the impact of infectious diseases in the developing world. Leishmaniasis is a vector-borne disease (VBD) that is among the ten major neglected tropical diseases. Although endemic in more than 90 countries, most affected ones, which represent over 90% of new cases, are Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nepal, and Sudan. Concerning Africa south of the equator, the impact of leishmaniasis is much lower. In several countries, like Angola, little is known about this infectious neglected disease. In the 70s a group of Portuguese researchers described three cases of cutaneous leishmaniasis in children from Huambo district and in the 90s visceral leishmaniasis was diagnosed in an African patient. More recently a canine survey in Luanda revealed two _Leishmania_ infected dogs.

After some suspected cases of human cutaneous leishmaniasis in Huambo region in 2017, Angola Health authorities and the Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical (IHMT), Lisbon, Portugal, established a collaboration in order to analyze some samples from suspected cases.

**Methods:** Three paraffin-embedded human skin samples from dermatological lesions were sent to IHMT for molecular analysis. After DNA extraction, PCR was performed by using four protocols with different molecular markers.

**Results:** One PCR protocol using a nested approach was positive in two of the samples. Sequencing analysis confirmed _Leishmania_ sp. DNA.

**Conclusions:** This was the first time that suspected human cutaneous samples were screened for leishmaniasis by molecular methods with detection of _Leishmania_ sp. DNA. These preliminary studies highlight the need for higher awareness of health professionals for leishmaniasis clinical forms, to recognize risk factors and the epidemiological features of leishmaniasis in the Huambo province. It would be relevant to perform further epidemiological studies in order to confirm if this VBD could be emergent in this country.