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Epidemiology status of cutaneous leishmaniasis in Morocco

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In Morocco, the number of cutaneous leishmaniasis (CL) cases is increasing over time and space with a total of 52 among 75 provinces. Both CL due to *L. major* and *L. tropica* are widespread in Morocco. CL due to *L. infantum* was sporadically represented in this country. However, the intersection of some clinical aspects between the three species of Leishmania and the possibility of polymorphism makes monitoring of the disease difficult which requires molecular studies. Therefore, the National Reference Laboratory of Leishmaniasis (NRLL) has performed epidemio-molecular studies to identify the circulating parasite species of leishmaniasis by PCR-ITS1-RFLP and to know its recent distribution. Results for these molecular studies have shown the presence none sporadic of *L. infantum* beside *L. tropica*. It is marked by an important number of cases and large geographical distribution in the north of country within foci of visceral leishmaniasis such as Taza, Sidi Kacem and Ouazzane provinces. Also, the NRLL has performed temporal and spatial distribution of CL due to *L. tropica* in endemic provinces and those recently affected by CL. This species was identified in several sectors and localities of the most affected provinces which prove the extension of the disease. These studies have shown that L. *tropica* which was limited to rural and semi-urban was extended to urban areas. Following the increase of CL cases due to *L. major* in 2010 with 6729, the national program has developed the response plan which allowed an important decrease of cases (460 in 2014). The molecular investigations showed the presence of *L. tropica* with low density beside some persistent cases of *L. major*. Finally, the molecular studies seem to be important since it allows the identification of new foci and the coexistence of multiple Leishmania species belonging to different provinces and sectors. These studies are the first step towards a better knowledge of disease evolution and consequently a better control and surveillance.

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