



## UNDER THE MICROSCOPE'S LENSES: DEMOCRATIZING PARASITOLOGY FOR HEALTH AGENTS IN PONTAL OF TRIÂNGULO MINEIRO, MINAS GERAIS

MARCO MIGUEL DE OLIVEIRA<sup>1</sup>, DAIANNY TÉOFILO BARROS<sup>1</sup>, ROSIANE NASCIMENTO ALVES<sup>1</sup>,  
KARINE REZENDE DE OLIVEIRA<sup>2</sup>


<sup>1</sup>STATE UNIVERSITY OF MINAS GERAIS, ITUIUTABA, MINAS GERAIS, BRAZIL, <sup>2</sup>FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF UBERLÂNDIA, ITUIUTABA, MINAS GERAIS, BRAZIL

### Abstract

Parasitic diseases disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, often causing debilitating comorbidities. These diseases are frequently neglected in research, funding, and public awareness. Thus, educational events are crucial for disseminating preventative knowledge. In August 2024, we conducted an educational update for 55 community health workers and endemic disease control agents in Capinópolis, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The event included theoretical explanations on intestinal, tissue, and blood parasites, followed by viewing some of them under a microscope or a stereomicroscope. Post-intervention knowledge gain was assessed via pre- (55 respondents) and post-event questionnaires (51 respondents), focusing on parasitic disease definitions, enteroparasitosis (prevention, diagnosis, and symptoms), toxoplasmosis prevention in pregnant women, and triatomine bug management. When asked about prior training on parasitic diseases, 36.4% of participants reported never having attended any event. Participants demonstrated improved knowledge post-event, correctly identifying parasitic diseases as caused by protozoa and worms (70.9% pre-event, 86.9% post-event correct response rates), recognizing enteroparasitosis prevention (74.5% pre-event and 98% post-event) and diagnosis (92.7% pre-event and 96.1% post-event), toxoplasmosis prevention (81.8% pre-event and 96.1% post-event), and demonstrating understanding the importance of sending of triatomine bug to the Center for Zoonosis Control (78.2% pre-event and 96.1% post-event). However, knowledge gaps still remained regarding enteroparasitosis symptoms (40% pre-event, 50% post-event correct response rates). In fact, the symptoms of enteroparasitosis are nonspecific, but clinical suspicion is essential for correct referral. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing training for these professionals, given their critical role in community health.

**Supported by:** Institutional Program of Support Extension Activities at the State University of Minas Gerais.

**Keywords:** Enteroparasitosis; Toxoplasmosis; Chagas Disease; Prevention.

 (11) 93232-3976

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 [info@parasito2025.com](mailto:info@parasito2025.com)

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SOCIEDADE TÉCNICO CIENTÍFICA BRASILEIRA DE PARASITOLOGIA (SBP) – CNPJ: 05.000.796/0001-04

Rua 235, N° 115, Quadra 62, Setor Leste Universitário, Goiânia, GO - CEP: 74.605-050