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KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TOXOPLASMOSIS AMONG HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN PRIMARY HEALTHCARE UNITS IN THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO IN AREAS WITH OCCURRENCES OF ANIMAL TOXOPLASMOSIS

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Abstract

Toxoplasmosis is a zoonosis caused by the protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii*, with cats as its main definitive host in the urban environment. There may be shared risk factors for its transmission between humans and animals, which can be sentinels for the presence of *T. gondii* in the environment. The present study aimed to identify the knowledge of primary health care professionals about toxoplasmosis in two neighborhoods of the Rio de Janeiro city (Tijuca and Maré), where seropositivity was found in cats and dogs, laboratory-confirmed by the Municipal Institute of Sanitary Surveillance, Zoonoses Surveillance, and Agricultural Inspection of Rio de Janeiro (IVISA-RIO). For this purpose, two structured questionnaires were applied, one directed to mid-level professionals (group 1), and another to higher education professionals (group 2). The study demonstrated that higher education professionals tend to provide guidance to patients about this parasitosis in their routine, while mid-level professionals do not, for the most part, with a tendency for patient guidance to increase with the longer working time of professionals in group 1 ($p=0.0186$). Regarding the biological cycle of the parasite, 30.4% (7/23) of the physicians and nurses answered erroneously that animals release oocysts throughout their lives, and 39.1% (9/23) stated that the oocysts are infectious immediately after their release. A significant difference was observed between the responses of groups 1 and 2 concerning the possible transmission routes of *T. gondii* ($p<0.001$), regarding the animal capable of releasing oocysts in feces ($p=0.0432$), as well as the control of insects in the household environment and daily use of repellent as prophylactic measures against toxoplasmosis ($p<0.05$). Overall, both groups had partial knowledge, with a need for greater understanding of biological cycle and transmission. This highlights the necessity for health education interventions for these professionals focusing on zoonosis.

Keywords: Parasite; One Health; Primary Care