

**KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN AN ENDEMIC AREA OF THE STATE OF PIAUÍ REGARDING CHAGAS DISEASE AND TRIATOMINE**

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**Abstract**

Chagas disease (ChD) is a zoonotic disease caused by *Trypanosoma cruzi*, with triatomine insects as its primary vectors. Although vector-borne transmission has decreased in Brazil, the discontinuation of entomological surveillance activities has contributed to the infestation and colonization of domestic and peridomestic environments by infected triatomines, particularly in rural areas, including the state of Piauí. This study assessed the knowledge and practices of the rural population of Campinas do Piauí regarding triatomines and ChD. Knowledge was evaluated through the application of a questionnaire, supplemented by a display of hemipteran specimens for vector identification. Both adults and adolescents from rural communities participated in the study. A total of 256 households from 18 rural communities in Campinas do Piauí were visited, and 347 residents were interviewed. The data revealed that the rural population had good knowledge of the vectors and frequently reported triatomine invasions in their homes. Regarding ChD, 76.6% (266/347) of respondents were familiar with the disease and associated the heart as the main affected organ. Additionally, 76.5% correctly identified triatomines and reported that the most common practice upon encountering them in domestic or peridomestic environments was to kill them. Among control measures, environmental cleaning and the use of insecticides were the most frequently mentioned strategies. The results indicate that the rural population of Campinas do Piauí has a good understanding of triatomines and ChD in both groups studied, however, there are limitations regarding preventive strategies against household infestation. Therefore, continuous vector control actions, combined with educational campaigns, are essential to promote active community participation in disease prevention.

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