Short Report: Human Trypanosomiasis in the Eastern Region of the Panama Province: New Endemic Areas for Chagas Disease

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Abstract. The epidemiology of Chagas disease was studied in five rural communities located in the eastern region of the Panama Province. Serological tests for Trypanosoma cruzi infection revealed a prevalence of 5.88% (12/204). Hemocultures coupled with polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis showed a Trypanosoma rangeli infection rate of 5.88% (12/204). An overall trypanosome infection index of 11.76% (24/204) was detected in this population. A total of 121 triatominé specimens were collected in domestic and peridomestic habitats. Rhodnius pallescens was confirmed as the predominant species. Molecular analysis showed that 17.8% (13/73) of the examined insects were positive for T. cruzi, 17.8% (13/73) for T. rangeli, and 35.6% (26/73) presented mixed infections. Among 73 R. pallescens evaluated, 16.4% (12/73) contained opossum blood meals. The epidemiological implications of these findings are discussed.