Chloroquine-Resistant Plasmodium vivax, Brazilian Amazon

To the Editor: Plasmodium vivax is the protozoan that causes the second most common form of malaria. Some resistant strains to chloroquine (CQ) occur in a few places in Asia and the Indo-Pacific Region (1–4). Although resistance of P. vivax to CQ has already been described in South America (5–7), there are limited data regarding this issue.

CQ plus primaquine is the standard treatment for vivax malaria worldwide. Presently, this drug regimen exhibits satisfactory efficacy in the Brazilian Amazon. However, in recent years several treatment failures presumably related to CQ resistance, have been reported in the city of Manaus (Amazonas) where vivax malaria predominates (7). This observation warrants local attention despite these cases having no confirmation of CQ blood levels on the basis of the appearance of asexual parasites against CQ plus desethylchloroquine levels exceeding the minimally effective plasma concentration proposed for sensitive parasite strains (>10 ng/mL) (8), according to Pan American Health Organization recommendations (9).

From September 2004 to February 2005, a 28-day in vivo test was conducted at the Foundation for Tropical Medicine of Amazonas (FMTAM) in Manaus, Brazil, to assess the efficacy of standard supervised CQ therapy. The test involved 166 volunteers with uncomplicated vivax malaria. Each volunteer was administered uncoated, scored, 150-mg CQ tablets (10 + 7.5 + 7.5 mg/kg at 24-hour intervals) (9). Primaquine was withheld until day 28 (dose regimen of 30 mg/day for 7 days). Among the 109 volunteers who completed the in vivo test, 19 had positive blood smears within the 28-day follow-up (1 on day 14, 3 on day 21, and 15 on day 28). All were required to undergo alternative therapy (mefloquine). Adequate CQ absorption was confirmed in these cases on day 2 with a mean ± SD CQ plasma concentration of 785.4 ± 800.1 ng/mL (10) Suspcted therapeutic failure (P. vivax CQ resistance) was confirmed in 11 (10.1%) of 109 persons with a mean isolated chloroquine plasma concentration ≥10 ng/mL (356.6 ± 296.1 ng/mL) (9). Desethylchloroquine levels in plasma were not measured.

Previously, a CQ efficacy study demonstrated that 4.4% of those treated had CQ-resistant P. vivax (7). In comparison, the proportion of failures (10.1%) in the current study seems to be relevant; even though most of the P. vivax infections (98, 89.9%) were successfully evaluated and adequate clinical and parasitologic responses were obtained. Currently, the FMTAM Manaus Outpatient Clinic is detecting patients from different areas of the city who show parasitologic recurrences after correct treatment within 28 days of the routine clinical follow-up. This observation is an indirect indicator of the possible regional spread of P. vivax CQ-resistant strains (unpub. data).

We believe our findings are important and merit the attention of local public health authorities. Considering the possibility of emerging underestimated P. vivax CQ resistance in Manaus, we feel it is essential to quickly clarify whether such documented resistance can copromote vivax malaria outbreaks in malaria-endemic areas within the Amazon.

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Franklin Simoes de Santana Filho,* Ana Ruth de Lima Arcanjo,* Yonne Melo Chehuan,* Monica Regina Costa,* Flor Ernestina Martinez-Espinosa,† Jose Luis Vieira,‡ Maria das Graças Costa Vale Barbosa,§ Wilson Duarte Alecrim,*¶ and Maria das Graças Costa Alecrim*¶¶

*Foundation for Tropical Medicine of Amazonas, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil; †Foundation for Research Support of Amazonas, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil; §Federal University of Pará, Belém, Pará, Brazil; ¶Nilton Lins University, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil; and ¶¶Nilton Lins University, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil

References

by early 2006, only sporadic cases were found. In July 2006, an outbreak of HPAI was confirmed on 2 chicken farms in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos (1,3). Most of Laos’ ≈20 million chickens are kept on family-owned backyard farms; 3.2 million are on commercial farms (4). This production meets 80% of Lao poultry (chicken, duck, goose, quail) needs; imports from neighboring countries, either through legal trade or cross-border smuggling, account for the rest (3). Common poultry diseases occur frequently during the cold season, and lack of reporting of poultry deaths is of concern (4).

Until February 2007, no human cases of influenza A (H5N1) had been reported in Lao PDR. To learn more about Laotians’ knowledge of HPAI and perceptions of their risk, we conducted a cross-sectional survey.

In March–April 2006, participants in 3 settings (Vientiane, urban; Oudomxay, semiurban; Attapeu Province and Hinheub District, both rural) were interviewed in the Lao language by means of a standardized 33-question survey. We recorded information about behavior, poultry handling and keeping practices, and poultry deaths. We used multivariate analysis (Stata, version 8; Stata Corporation, College Station, TX, USA) to analyze the factors associated with behavior changes.

Using a random sampling list of visitors and vendors, we interviewed 461 respondents in 4 Vientiane city markets (Vientiane has 114,793 visitors and vendors, we interviewed in the Lao language by interviewees had notiﬁed authorities. Oral consent for interview was obtained from the health and market

Overall, 96.9% of respondents had already heard of HPAI, mainly through television. Urban residents ranked it as the most well-known poultry disease, but rural residents ranked it ﬁfth. Less than half of the respondents had some knowledge of the disease signs and symptoms for humans and poultry; 28.4% could describe 1 symptom. Half of the respondents believed that they were not at risk for human avian inﬂuenza or that their poultry were not at risk for it. Respondents in urban and semiurban areas knew more about avian inﬂuenza than those in rural areas.

During the cold season, poultry deaths were higher in the north (cold-er) and south than in Vientiane. The poultry mortality rate during the cold season was similar to that of Cambo-dia (6). Behavior regarding poultry deaths differed between areas. Despite a high rate of poultry deaths, none of the interviewees had notiﬁed authorities. Since hearing about HPAI, 67.1%