Abstract

Introduction: Since the middle of last century, cases of rickettsiosis have been found in Panamá when outbreaks of murine typhus and spotted fever were reported. Since then, little information exists about its prevalence in this country, since it is most often is misdiagnosed as another disease. Objectives: The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the presence of Rickettsia infections in humans in three locations in Panamá. These locations are agricultural areas, near forested areas or those who work in zoo.

Materials and methods: Three locations where chosen for this study: Tortí, El Valle de Antón and workers in the Summit Municipal Park in Panamá City. All volunteers signed an informed consent and answered a questionnaire. The samples were analyzed for the detection of rickettsial spotted fever and typhus group by the indirect immunofluorescence (using commercial kits) and antigens of Rickettsia rickettsii and R. amblyommii. Results: Blood samples were taken from 97 volunteers in Tortí (25), El Valle de Anton (37) and Summit Municipal Park (35). Of these, a total of 38 (39%) samples reacted to one of the two methods: eight (32%) in Tortí, 18 (48%) in El Valle and 12 (34%) in Summit Municipal Park. Conclusion: The results show a high prevalence of antibodies to Rickettsia belonging to the spotted fever group in each of the three study areas, in addition to presenting evidence of the typhus group Rickettsia in El Valle de Antón. These areas could be considered endemic for rickettsiosis as there are conditions for maintaining them.

Keywords

Rickettsiaceae infections, immunoglobulin G, disease outbreaks, epidemiology, Panamá.