Abstract

Introduction: Leprosy is a disease with catastrophic consequences for health. In this article, the household contacts of leprosy patients in the Caribbean region and the department of Antioquia were characterized. Materials and methods: A retrospective study was conducted with 383 contacts of 95 patients with multibacillary or paucibacillary leprosy recorded in the Leprosy program studies carried out by the Colombian Institute of Tropical Medicine (ICMT) at the period 2003 - 2007 in the departments of Bolivar, Cordoba and Sucre. A survey was taken seeking to obtain the variables of interest in terms of the household contact and the patient, and it was defined the presence or absence of anti PGL-1 antibodies using the Enzyme-Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay (ELISA) technique. The software SPSS version 8.0 was used to process the information; and the data analysis included absolute and relative frequencies of qualitative variables, summary measures for quantitative variables, and proportion differences by sex were determined by using a level of significance of 5 %. Results: The percentage of women was higher than men after age 20, while men predominated in the five-year periods from 0 to 19 years. Most of were households contacts were housewives (27 %) and 4.4 % farmers. 53 % lived in Cordoba, 29.4 % in Bolivar, 11.5 % in Sucre and the lowest corresponded to the department of Antioquia. The households contacts studied elementary school and incomplete high school at a rate of 32 % and 20 % respectively, and had a low degree of higher education (2.1 % -2.3 %). Women have a higher risk of presenting anti PGL-1 antibodies than men (OR 2.01). Conclusion: the household contacts of leprosy patients are mainly female, with a mean cohabitation time of 12 years. This characterization allows the recognition of the population in three Colombian regions, in order to direct possible actions which could impact the illnesses transmission.

Keywords

Leprosy, Epidemiology, Antibodies, Colombia, Mycobacterium leprae, Household contacts.