Autochthonous Leishmaniasis: an Emerging Zoonosis in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

There have been increasing reports of autochthonous leishmaniasis in Thailand during the past 5 years. All cases, excluding one, were caused by the novel *Leishmania siamensis* which have been reported only in Thailand. However, cutaneous autochthonous leishmaniasis caused by *L. siamensis* was recently described in horses of central Europe and the United States as well as a cow in Switzerland. It is believed that this is an emerging vector-borne zoonotic disease of potential public health concern in Thailand. The clinical manifestations can be visceral, cutaneous, as well as mixed visceral and cutaneous forms. Surprisingly, of 3 patients with mixed visceral and cutaneous leishmaniasis, 2 initially presented with cutaneous leishmaniasis for few months and 4 years, respectively, before a development of visceral leishmaniasis. Regarding diagnostic investigations, the PCR test is practical and available in most university hospitals in Bangkok. The saliva specimen for PCR testing seems to be the most sensitive method, in comparison with other clinical specimens. To date, there are 3 potential sandfly vectors including *Phlebotomus argentipes*, *P. major major*, and *Sergentomyia (Neophlebotomus) gemmea*. There is an urgent need for comprehensive studies regarding potential sandfly vectors, reservoir animals, and case finding for both symptomatic and asymptomatic patients of leishmaniasis in Thailand. (*J Infect Dis Antimicrob Agents* 2014;31:1-8.)

Keywords: *Leishmania siamensis*, *Leishmania infantum*, leishmaniasis, visceral leishmaniasis, autochthonous

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