

Outbreak of cutaneous leishmaniasis before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jahrom, an endemic region in the southwest of Iran

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Abstract

The emergence of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has a considerable effect on the burden of other diseases. Cutaneous leishmaniasis (CL) is an endemic parasitic disease in Iran. Here, we report an outbreak of zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis (ZCL) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jahrom county, which is an endemic region in the southwest of Iran. Before the pandemic, the annual occurrence of CL was less than 240 cases per year, while the number of cases increased to 307 and 771 cases in the first and second years after the pandemic, respectively. Molecular detection of some isolates identified *Leishmania major*. The rodent control program was completely interrupted during the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak in Jahrom (February to December 2020), then the program restarted again as routine from the summer of 2021 till now. Interrupted rodent control program along with inadequate screening programs of CL patients were probably one of the causes of this outbreak in Jahrom.

Keywords: SARS-CoV-2, *Leishmania major*, Zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis, Iran, COVID-19