



ELSEVIER



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Chikungunya in Bolivia: Still a Neglected Disease?

To the editor,

We read with great interest the article by Murillo-Zamora et al about chikungunya (CHIKV) (1), an emerging condition in the Americas, but still neglected in some countries. Then, we would like to take the opportunity to highlight the current situation of this disease in Bolivia, as well as difficulties and gaps of knowledge for its diagnosis, treatment and control.

Since the first Latin American epidemic of CHIKV (2014), this virus spreaded rapidly in areas where *Aedes aegypti* is present, including Bolivia (2), where high incidence rates have been estimated (30.47 cases/100,000 pop) during 2017 (3). Thus, CHIKV infection has become a new threat to public health and an endemic disease with acute phase problems but also well-known chronic complications (1,2,4–6). Its specific laboratory diagnosis still needs improve. Then, better serological and affordable diagnostic tools for new endo-epidemic regions are still required.

Being a dynamic disease, CHIKV infection can be influenced till 50–60% on its occurrence during El Niño's phenomenon (ENSO, El Niño Southern Oscillation). In the context of CHIKV infection, the Latin American countries problem is the heterogeneity of health systems. The economic impact of dealing with an epidemic is still unknown to many nations of the region and is also one of the most important factors to address within local health systems. Bolivia is not an isolated case. With a Human Development Index (HDI) in the position 114 for 2014, we can consider as the main factor for the adequate management of epidemic outbreaks in the country the lack of funds for research in this and other emerging arboviruses, such as it would be the case also of Zika.

Training of health personnel (including undergraduate students) is an essential strategy to strengthen actions in response to epidemics. Finally, it is important to act in order to achieve control of CHIKV infection in our regions, and more large-scale studies are necessary to understand, define signs, characterize symptoms, establish an early diagnosis, preventive and therapeutic interventions for CHIKV infection, especially in chronic complications, such as rheumatism, which should be continued studying thoroughly (1,5,6).

References

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