

## ON THE FOCUS OF KALA-AZAR IN THE STATE OF RORAIMA, BRAZIL

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Between December 1988 and April 1989, N.A. Araújo et al. (1989, Resumos XI Cong. Bras. Parasitol., p. 16) and M. Guerra et al. (1989, Resumos XI Cong. Bras. Parasitol., p. 17) reported the occurrence of 6 human cases of visceral leishmaniasis in children, age group 0-12 years, in the municipality of Normandia, Roraima State. The disease had never been previously found in the State. The latter authors, examining 41 dogs, observed the usual symptoms of canine disease: loss of weight, increase in nails, shedding of hair, cutaneous and keratoids lesions. M. G. Paes et al. (1989, Resumos XI Cong. Bras. Parasitol., p. 165) recorded, for the first time, the presence of *Lutzomyia longipalpis* in Roraima, among sandflies collected in the kala-azar focus.

Posteriorly, and until June, 33 new human cases were diagnosed by one of us (E.D.D.). In July an emergency program was implemented for the active search of patients in the municipality of Normandia, which inhabited mostly by Macuxi indians.

To date we have visited 30 indians villages, and by bone marrow puncture of 92 suspected cases, all were parasitologically confirmed.

According to RADAMBRASIL (1975, DNPM — Projeto Radambrasil. v.8, 428p.), the area of

the kala-azar out break is constituted of vegetation groups dispersed within the savannah and dense forest, being a sub-region of low mountain chains of the guianian complex, with its xeromorphic characteristics, which appear more or less evident according to the relief and the conditions of aridity of the area. The vegetation cover is generally of low pasture, and difficult access, with elevations up to 800m; the soil is rocky and the vegetation scarce. *Lutzomyia longipalpis*, wich accounted for 90% of the sand fly fauna, is found among rocks or around the huts of the indians villages ("malocas"). The Macuxi villages are located within small valleys, between the mountains, and are formed of houses with adobe walls, a great many with wooden doors and windows, covered with "buriti" palm leaves, the floor being of earth. The chicken houses and other animal enclosures, are quite close to the houses, which facilitates the transmission between dogs and humans.

The Macuxi indians are of nomadic habits, usually having relatives among indians in other villages (even within British Guiana), often resulting in family displacements, which can last several months, in order to visit relatives. During the visits, it is custom to take along dogs, the main domestic reservoirs.