

## Chagas' disease: The Brazilian experience

There is a growing interest on Chagas' disease in the most advanced research centers. This growing interest can be ascribed to some factors:

- The high prevalence of the disease that runs as high as 23% in blood donors in some countries such as Bolivia.
- The high populational migration rate from rural to urban areas. This phenomenon contributes to the dissemination of the disease.
- The morbidity and mortality rates caused by the disease's cardiac, digestive, and nervous system complications.

These facts mentioned before account for the great efforts that the distinct health programs are making in the countries where the Chagas' disease is very prevalent. These countries are: Bolivia, Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Panama, and other countries.

Several authors from countries as Japan, USA, England and France have, in association with other authors from high prevalence countries or not, published in the last few years epidemiological, clinical, immunology reports about Chaga's disease. Additionally, other reports about the treatment of Chagas' infection and its complications in the different systems and organs clearly demonstrates the interest this medical condition produces in the research community.

The Brazilian experience relates to a fundamental problem: the Public Health as a regional, nationwide and

worldwide problem. In the search for a solution, it is understood that some reports in the medical literature indicate that Chagas' disease is the factor responsible for 0.9% of all deaths in the state of São Paulo alone, with a higher prevalence in the male gender. On the other hand, other reports document the morbidity of the Chagas' Disease in USA immigrants and the disease's transmission risks in the US.

At this present time, when boundaries, borders and barriers are either flexible or absent, it is necessary to contemplate the causes of the disease and contemplate the means to protect the population.

In the year of 1994, the discussion entitled *Elimination of Transmission of Chagas' Disease in the Southernmost Latin America* was held at the World Health Forum. This accounts for our earnest concern and reinforces the real demand for a worldwide public health assistance strategic policy.

The Brazilian scientific community is searching for alternatives and more efficient responses for these questions. This publication is a righteous instance of this effort. Reports and research outcomes are presented in this issue of the *São Paulo Medical Journal*. This was aimed at informing, analyzing and discussing the State of the Art on Chagas' heart disease. This essay may even become a valuable instrument for the northern hemisphere countries that are struggling against the dissemination of

the Chagas' disease as well struggling with efforts to prevent its associated morbidity and mortality.

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