ONCHOCERCIASIS IN TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Background: Onchocerciasis, commonly known as river blindness, is an important cause of dermatitis and visual impairment, affecting about 18 million of people in Africa and Latin America, for a total of 37 endemic countries. It is caused by the filarial nematode, Onchocerca volvulus, which is transmitted by the bite of a black fly of the genus Simulium, near freely flowing waterways.

Patients and Methods: We report 8 patients observed in the Italian Dermatological Centre (IDC) in Mekelle, capital of Tigray, the northern region of Ethiopia, between March and September 2006. All patient presented long history of spread itching and chronic dermatitis especially on the buttocks and lower limbs. Skin snips of the lesions showed presences of microfilariae.

Results: Eight diagnosis of onchocerciasis were done and treatment with diethylcarbamazine PO was performed.

Conclusions: Ethiopia is considered an endemic area for onchocerciasis, but all the literature regards the western and southwestern regions of this country. We report cases observed in Tigray, a region of about Km2 54.500 for more than 4 million of inhabitants, where there are no information regarding the presence of this infection and where is not yet available ivermectin, the first line treatment for ochocerciasis.

References