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Visceral leishmaniasis in children in an Iranian referral pediatric center during 2004-2011

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Visceral leishmaniasis (VL) is one of the most important parasitic diseases which are endemic in at least 20 of the 30 provinces of Iran. The aim of the present study was to review the records of children hospitalized with VL in order to characterize the clinical features of children as well as laboratory finding in an Iranian referral pediatric center, Tehran, Iran. The medical records of all children with a final diagnosis of VL were reviewed from 2004 to 2011. Demographic, clinical information, laboratory finding and treatment were considered. A total number of 34 children with confirmed VL through 2004-2011 were included in the study. The mean age of these patients were 26.9 ± 18.9 months and 91.2% of them were under the age of five years. The most prevalent sign and symptoms were fever (97.1%), pallor and weakness (97.1%), appetite loss (61.8%), splenomegaly (97.1%) and hepatomegaly (88.2%). The most frequent laboratory abnormalities were hematological including anemia (97.1%), thrombocytopenia (91.2%) and leukopenia (67.6%). Albumin <3 g/dL and globulin was >3.5 g/dL was found in 60% and 50% of patients, respectively. DAT was performed in 23 cases and all of them showed anti-*Leishmania* antibodies with titers of $\geq 1:3200$. In addition, 90% of patients had positive rK39 results. Identification of *Leishmania* in the aspirates of the bone marrow was found in 83.3% of patients. Regional surveillance system in order to monitoring of leishmaniasis trends as well as detection of new emerging foci is recommended. In addition, vector control as well as increase in public awareness with regard to safety measures should be implemented.

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