ABSTRACT

Background: Despite efforts put by the government and other Non-Governmental Organizations in the fight against human Leishmaniasis, the disease still remains one of the major health challenges in Karamoja sub-region. Understanding the disease burden and its predisposing factors is essential in the fight against the disease in such endemic areas. This study established the prevalence and predisposing factors of human Leishmaniasis among patients attending health care facilities in Amudat district between March to April 2023.

Methods: A cross sectional study design was used; questionnaire was used to capture qualitative data from study participants. A total of 200 study participants were purposively sampled and recruited from 10 health facilities in Amudat district. Capillary blood was aseptically collected and screened serologically and confirmed by bone marrow microscopy.

STATA version 14 was used for descriptive data analysis and output presented inform of charts, tables and bar graphs. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to establish significant factors associated with *Leishmania* infections and factors with P value ≤ 0.05 were taken to be significant. Knowledge and awareness level of the participants regarding leishmaniasis was assessed using Ashur's scale.

Results: Of the 200 study participants screened for leishmaniasis, 18 tested positive by serology (rK39) and only 11 were confirmed positive by bone marrow microscopy. Thus, the prevalence of leishmaniasis in the study was 5.5% (11/200) with males being the most affected 4.0% (8/200) than females 1.5% (3/200). The disease was significantly associated with malnutrition, grazing of livestock, age and presence of ant-hills near homesteads. The knowledge levels of the study participants regarding the disease was generally low (36.1%). However, they were on average (43.5%) knowledgeable of knowing sand flies as vectors for the disease.

Conclusion and recommendation: Human Leishmaniasis is a health challenge in Amudat district affecting the quality of life; low level of awareness, malnutrition and grazing of livestock in sand flies infested fields are associated with its spread.

Therefore we recommend that community awareness level on the transmission and prevention measures be enhanced. Furthermore, routine screening for early diagnosis and management is vital in order to prevent disease spread and associated negative impacts.

Studies on insect vector, distribution, abundance and infectivity in the district are recommended.