LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Jessica CUSATO* **(BSc, MSc, MS), Antonio D'AVOLIO (BSc, MSc, MS) and Giovanni DI PERRI (MD, PhD)**
University of Turin, Department of Medical Sciences, Amedeo di Savoia Hospital, 10149, Turin, Italy

We read with interest Tamarozzi *et al.* study regarding the prevalence of abdominal cystic echinococcosis in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey rural areas (the HERACLES project) [1]. In this analysis, authors performed a cross-sectional ultrasound-based survey, providing an estimate of echinococcosis.

Population-based imaging studies have been already performed in some high endemicity areas, but these data are not enough to extrapolate results for larger surfaces. For these reasons, this study has been projected to evaluate not only the prevalence of cystic echinococcosis, but also cyst stage distribution and number of infected people in the rural population.

A large number of patients have been analyzed: 24693 individuals. When adjusting for age and gender, abdominal cystic echinococcosis prevalences are 0.41% for Bulgaria and Romania and 0.59% for Turkey: higher compared to known data, which seem to underestimate, since they suggest this infection is uncommon.

Therefore, this survey is very interesting and might provide more reliable data compared to hospital-based estimates; furthermore, it could be very useful, since there are no studies concerning Romania, only one study for Bulgaria and six studies for Turkey, but all performed in a small number of patients or with restrictions on age groups.

Although improvements have been achieved concerning eradication and prevention measures, WHO advocates echinococcosis control and this analysis could be a support for surveillance.

In fact, although this pathology is usually benign, several complications could occur and no marker is available in predicting them; for this reason, this project could invite clinicians to consider this infection in terms of diagnosis, promoting case notification and cost-benefit analyses in public health interventions.

In conclusion, it could be useful for international agencies to consider this project for encouraging improvements in surveillance of cystic echinococcosis and producing new health policies for its notification in humans and animals.

REFERENCES

1. Tamarozzi F, Akhan O, Cretu CM, Vutova K, Akinci D, Chipeva R, et al. Prevalence of abdominal cystic echinococcosis in rural Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey: A cross-sectional, ultrasound-based, population study from the heracles project. Lancet Infect Dis 2018;18:769-778.

**Corresponding author:* Jessica Cusato (BSc, MSc, MS), University of Turin, Department of Medical Sciences, Amedeo di Savoia Hospital, 10149, Turin, Italy, e-mail: jessica.cusato@unito.it