

“Kissing Bug”™ Infected 300K Americans With Deadly Disease

Boris Djuric November 12, 2014



Triatomines bugs, also called “kissing bugs,” carry a parasite called *Trypanosoma cruzi*. Photo: Getty Images

July, the CDC estimated that 300,000 people in the US had been infected; however by now it could be closer to 400,000.

([Newswire.net](#) -- November 12, 2014) -- Triatomines bugs, also called “kissing bugs,” carry a parasite called *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which leaks into the blood stream and causes the Chagas disease. Chagas is so called the ‘silent killer’ because the parasite can dwell in human body decades before starting to cause serious problems that eventually could lead to a death.

According to the CDC, a patient will exhibit symptoms which are typical for a great number of diseases - fever, fatigue, body aches, headache, rash, loss of appetite, diarrhea, and vomiting, so it could easily be mistaken for another disease.

The lead author of two of three recently published studies, Houston medical College researcher Melissa Nolan Garcia said, "People don't normally feel sick, so they don't seek medical care, but it ultimately ends up causing heart disease in about 30 percent of those who are infected."

As part of an educational campaign to increase physician awareness, Garcia spoke to several groups of physicians and cardiologists. She realized they don't make the connection when the patient is sitting in front of them, even if they are aware that Chagas could cause the symptoms.

“The concerning thing is that the majority of the patients [I spoke to] are going to physicians, and the physicians are telling them, ‘No you don't have the disease’,” Garcia said, according to Al Jazeera America.

“I wouldn't be surprised if the numbers were higher and we're just not seeing it,” said Dr. Julie-Ann Crewalk, a pediatrician in Northern Virginia who also thinks that the disease is being underdiagnosed.

“It's not something that we think of asking right away,” she told the Atlantic.

Most of the Chagas cases in the US are from people who have traveled to Latin America, and were infected there, said CDC. The parasite, however, has arrived in the US, Garcia told HealthDay News, sharing her research results.

"We are finding new evidence that locally acquired human transmission is occurring in Texas," she said adding they were surprised to find that 36 percent are locally acquired cases.

According to interviews by the Atlantic with local physicians, the disease is also growing just outside Washington, DC. While the number of people with the Chagas disease in Northern Virginia is small, it may be higher due to the lack of routine screening for it.

The “ground zero” could be Northern Virginia, cardiologist Dr. Rachel Marcus believes, because of the volume of immigrants from Bolivia, where the disease is endemic, she explained.

Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/news/00086008-kissing-bug-infected-300k-americans-with-deadly-disease.html>