Maintenance and operation of Triatomine Information Posts: an insight into the views of entomological surveillance professionals for endemic municipalities in Minas Gerais

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Vector control of Chagas disease (CD) is still the principal means of prevention and control which has an important impact in endemic areas of the disease. Currently, in Brazil, the principal form of entomological surveillance is one that involves public participation. In this, a resident, when identifying the presence in their domiciles of the triatomine insects suspected of being the vector of the parasite causing CD, must collect and take the insects to a Triatomine Information Post (TIP). Accordingly, TIPs are essential tools for entomological surveillance of CD, despite currently falling into disuse in many endemic regions. The objective of this study was to understand what are the factors involved in the maintence of TIPs in municipalities of the state of Minas Gerais classified as being at high risk for domestic reinfestion by triatomines. This was achieved through interviewing the coordinators of entomological surveillance for CD from the endemic municipalities of the Gerência or Superintendência Regional de Saúde of Unaí, Pirapora, Januária, Pedra Azul and Montes Claros. Five focus groups, each with 9 to 12 coordinators, were undertaken, using a schedule/script containing questions addressing the experience and career trajectory of the professional, and their knowledge about entomological surveillance of CD and TIPs. The focus groups, undertaken in September and November 2021, using an online platform, were recorded, and the transcripts subjected to Bardin content analysis. In the analyzes five thematic categories were recognized, including one related to the functioning of TIPs. According to the participants, the situation and functioning of TIPs was diverse, with some municipalities having a high number of unused TIPs, while others had all of the installed TIPs active, with some participants being unaware of the history of TIP installation. Of paricular importance was the necessity for re-evaluation of TIP use, and the need to increase the number of TIPs in some municipalities and their removal in others. Also discussed were the reasons for the difficulty of maintaining TIPs, the lack of public awareness of the existence of the TIPs and their consequent disuse, poor spatial distribution of the TIPs, failure to maintain and staff the TIP, and not providing results of insect examination to the public. According to the participants, the principal criteria to be considered for the installation and maintenance of the TIPs were installation in a place of easy access to the public and in areas with higher numbers captured triatomines. Furthermore, the importance of increasing financial resources, mobilization of health professionals, disseminating information to the public and their engagement and involvement in entomological surveillance were highlighted. Through listening to the opinions of professionals working on the front-line of CD vector control, this study contributes to the understanding of the problems existing in the maintenance and functioning of the TIPs in endemic areas. This knowledge will be extremely important and can guide public policies and decision-making by the institutions responsible.

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