

## Leprosy in children under fifteen years old in a Brazilian hyperendemic capital

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**Abstract:** Leprosy is a serious public health problem in Brazil and, the occurrence of cases in children under the age of 15, indicates active locus of infection and recent transmission. In Brazil, in 2018 there were 1705 new cases of leprosy in children under 15 years old. The state of Maranhão presents the highest number of cases notified in the country and in a detection rate of 15.21 cases / 100,000, being characterized as hyperendemic, with majority of the cases in São Luís, capital city.

The study aims to describe the sociodemographic and clinical profile of leprosy cases in children under 15 years of age, notified in the years 2010 to 2017, in the city of São Luís - MA, Brazil. Descriptive study, with data collection carried out from August to December of 2019, from medical records, book of registration of new cases and the Health Surveillance Notification Information System.

During these years, 499 leprosy cases were reported in children under 15 years of age, with an average of 62 cases per year and occurrence in the age groups: 1 to 4 years (9.0%), 6 to 10 years (41.3%) and 11 to 14 years (46.7%). The highest frequencies were male (51.9%), brown (70.0%) and schooling from 5th to 8th grade incomplete (39.6%). Regarding clinical characteristics, 10.6% were indeterminate, 31.9% tuberculoid, 49.9% dimorphic, 6.5% virchowian and 1.0% with a non-classified clinical form. As for the operational classification, a majority was multibacillary (57.5%). Regarding the number of skin lesions, 77.35% had zero to five injuries, 15.8% from 6 to 10 injuries and 6.8% more than 10 injuries. The results related to the degree of physical disability at the beginning of the treatment, showed that although 80.3% were grade zero, 11.8% had some degree of physical disability due to the disease (9.0% grade 1 and 2.8% grade 2). From the observed 499 cases, 464 (92.99%) evoked new cases as they had the mode of detection: referral (32.8%), spontaneous demand (49.1%), collectivity examination (6.2%) and examination of contacts (11.9%).

As a conclusion, we can infer that leprosy in children under 15 years of age, the registration of multibacillary forms and the presence of physical disabilities at the beginning of the treatment reflects a late diagnosis and that, an identification of new cases by example of pressured contact of contamination in the family environment. There is a need to develop strategies that provide early diagnosis in this age group, thus avoiding multibacillary forms and complications resulting from the disease.

**Keywords:** Hansen's disease, under 15 years old, Epidemiology, Clinic



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