

Leishmaniasis in Sri Lanka: Current and Future Challenges

Professor Nadira Karunaweera

Department of Parasitology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Leishmaniasis, a neglected tropical disease, is targeted for elimination from South Asia by year 2020. However, cases of *L. donovani*-induced cutaneous leishmaniasis have risen in Sri Lanka since 2001 with no national-level planning for its containment so far. Leishmaniasis patient data (2001-2018) were analyzed to identify temporal and geographical disease trends and monitor disease hotspots. We noted a progression in case rates, including a sharp rise in 2018, showing temporal expansion of disease-prevalent areas and 2 persistent hotspots. The northern hotspot shifted and shrank over time, but the southern hotspot progressively expanded while remaining spatially static. Regional incidence differences within the country for age and sex were also noted. Thus, the temporally progressive and spatially expanding incidence of leishmaniasis with distinct geographic patterns and disease hotspots, signal an urgent need for effective disease control interventions.