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Entamoeba histolytica/dispar/moshkovskii complex in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

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Epidemiological studies on species-specific *Entamoeba* infections are scarce due to the morphological similarity of pathogenic *Entamoeba histolytica* and nonpathogenic *E. dispar* and *E. moshkovskii*. The discrimination of these species is frequently based on coproantigen (*E. histolytica*-Gal/GalNAc lectin specific) detection by immunoassays. However, specific *E. histolytica*-lectin is not expressed in cysts, which are eliminated by asymptomatic individuals leading to false-negative results and an underestimation of amebiasis prevalence. This study aimed to assess the frequency of the species from *E. histolytica/dispar/moshkovskii* complex by molecular and immunological techniques in individuals treated at a public health system in Salvador-Bahia, Brazil. A cross-sectional study involving 55,218 individuals was carried out. The diagnosis was based on microscopy revealing *E. histolytica/dispar/moshkovskii* complex. The species differentiation was performed by *E. histolytica*-specific antigen, serological evaluation and by molecular technique. The overall prevalence of *E. histolytica/dispar/moshkovskii* complex determined by microscopy was approximately 0.49% (273/55,218). *E. histolytica*-specific antigen detection and molecular characterization returned 100% negativity for *E. histolytica*. However, serological evaluation returned an 8.9% positivity (8/90). In the analyzed sample, it was not possible to prove the presence of *E. histolytica* and *E. moshkovskii*, although the circulation of *E. histolytica* was confirmed by circulating IgG anti-*E. histolytica*.