

KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO CHIKUNGUNYA IN RURAL NORTHERN COSTA RICA

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Chikungunya is an emerging infectious arthropod-borne virus that causes a high fever and severe joint pain. The disease is new to Costa Rica, however, 106 cases were confirmed last year and this number continues to grow. This study evaluated Chikungunya related knowledge and perceptions of 250 community members in Venecia de San Carlos, Costa Rica. Sources of information and access to information were also investigated. Results showed that while participants understood that a mosquito transmits the disease and that this mosquito breeds in standing water, very few specified that this water was clean. Higher Chikungunya knowledge was significantly related to higher level of education, but not age or gender. Those who worked in the health field were more likely to know more about the disease than those in other occupations. While familiarity with the disease predicted a higher level of understanding, a higher level of concern did not predict a higher level of understanding. A higher knowledge score was also significantly related to a greater access of media and therefore information. Among many other information sources, 61% of participants stated that their information about Chikungunya came from television and nearly all participants watched the news. Through these media outlets, public health campaigns can be widespread and further analysis of Chikungunya vector behavior and symptom severity and duration can strengthen the communication of important preventative strategies and recognition of the disease.