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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF INCIDENCE AND RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INTESTINAL PARASITES IN CHILDREN IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Intestinal parasites are a serious public health problem in Brazil and worldwide. The main factors associated with parasitic infections in children are the lack of basic sanitation and food hygiene, the incidence is higher in underdeveloped countries, and socioeconomic status is one of the main causes and may be associated with other various determinants. **Materials and Methods:** This is a systematic review of the incidence and risk factors associated with intestinal parasites in children in Brazil and a survey of the main parasitic infections that cause infection in children. Using as selection criteria articles in Portuguese, English and Spanish from 2010 to 2020 in Google Scholar, SciELO, PubMed databases. **Results:** The age of the children was associated with the occurrence of parasitosis, the knowledge of parents about intestinal parasites was also associated with the incidence. The lack of basic sanitation and socioeconomic conditions proved to be one of the main factors for the incidence of intestinal parasites in children. **Conclusion:** Therefore, more efficient control measures should be proposed for the population, especially parents, taking into account the main associated factors, as a way to reduce the incidence of these parasitic infections in children.

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INTRODUÇÃO

Intestinal parasites are a relevant public health problem in Brazil and worldwide. They are mainly endemic, in developing and underdeveloped countries, affecting socially disadvantaged populations and economically unreasonable. The main form of contamination occurs through ingestion of contaminated food or water and through the skin by small wounds, facilitating the penetration of infective larvae, providing the development of diseases that can lead to malnutrition, anemia, cognitive delay, among other symptoms (BELO *et al.*, 2012). According to data from the National Survey, carried out from 2011 to 2015, the Amazon Region concentrates the states with the highest prevalence, especially Pará (7.21%), Tocantins (6.06%) and Amazonas (3, 14%). The highest prevalence was found in the northeast region in the states of Sergipe (6.62%), Maranhão (15.79%), Paraíba (5.09%) and Bahia (4.23%). (EPIDEMIOLOGICAL BULLETIN., 2019) The increase in the prevalence of intestinal parasites is in places where living conditions

are unsatisfactory and basic sanitation is inexistent. The country is socioeconomic status is one of the main factors for the development of diseases linked to the lack of basic sanitation, as the lack of knowledge, preparation and cleaning of food and personal hygiene principles facilitates infection in endemic areas, predisposing the population to reinfection. Currently, Brazil is still seeking to develop more specific control measures for the most vulnerable populations, such as children who are subject to greater risk of contamination. (BELO *et al.*, 2012). Intestinal parasites are a type of endoparasitism. Parasites belonging to the phyla Protozoa, Platyhelminthes, Nematoda, Acanthocephala live in the gastrointestinal tract of man. It is estimated that parasitized individuals harbor at least one species of intestinal parasite, being *Trichuris trichiura*, Hookworms and *Ascaris lumbricoides* the ones with the highest frequencies. (FRECKLETON *et al.*, 2019). Human susceptibility is universal, so school-age children have an epidemiological importance in the spread of intestinal parasites. This age group is highly susceptible and are responsible for the elimination of large amounts of eggs in the

environment through feces. This condition is aggravated when children are exposed to poor hygiene conditions and lack of basic sanitation. (FONSECA, et al., 2018) The highest levels reached by the prevalence and intensity of the infection are among children aged 5 to 14 years, mainly *Ascaris lumbricoides* and *Trichuris trichiura*, whereas hookworm disease usually affects adults over 20 years of age. We can observe the acquired immunity of adults by reducing the prevalence and the parasite load, when compared to younger age groups, especially in endemic areas. (ALVES; SANTOS FILHO, 2015). Currently, intestinal parasites persist as an important public health challenge affecting mainly children despite the scientific and technological development for prevention and treatment. It is evident from the social point of view that enteroparasitosis cause a decrease in the quality of life of children and low productivity at school age and damage to the human body in general, damage generated from classic clinical manifestations, such as malnutrition. That way, studying the incidence of intestinal parasites and the factors associated with cases reported in the literature is of paramount importance for the development of control measures for susceptible populations. (CARDOSO *et al.*, 2019). On the whole, in countries where population growth does not keep pace with improvements in health, the transmission of various types of parasitic diseases is still perpetuated, as individuals who live in precarious conditions of basic sanitation, water supply, housing and from the lack of personal and collective hygiene habits are the most prone to the acquisition of diseases in the gastrointestinal tract. (SILVA *et al.*, 2017). The main factors associated with the incidence of intestinal parasites are linked to the lack of basic sanitation and sanitation of contaminated food. That way, it is necessary to develop strategies and health plans to combat parasitic infections and the predisposition to reinfection in endemic regions. (SANTOS *et al.*, 2014)

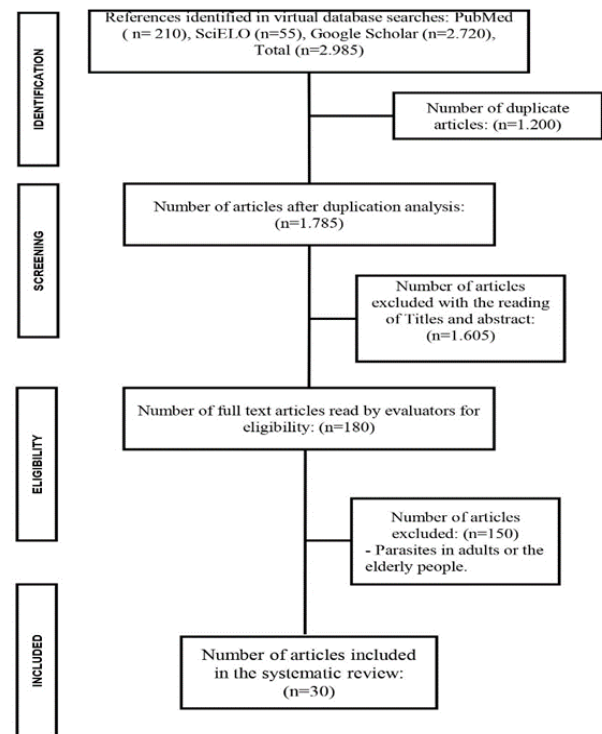
MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a systematic review of the incidence and risk factors associated with intestinal parasites in children in Brazil and a survey of the main parasitic infections that cause infection in children. Using as selection criteria articles in Portuguese, English and Spanish from the period 2010 to 2020 in the Google Scholar, Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), PubMed databases. The descriptors used in the research were: parasitosis in children in Brazil, risk factors associated with parasitosis, incidence of parasitosis. The articles were identified according to the following inclusion criteria: case reports of parasitosis and risk factors reported by region. The exclusion criteria were articles not available in complete data and those that did not represent case reports. The selection of articles followed the PRISMA flowchart (MOHER *et al.*, 2010). For data extraction, tables were created containing the following information: authors, year of publication, age group of children and incidence. were analyzed individually and, later, discussed and crossed in a pertinent analysis of the subject. The search terms used 2,985 articles were found. Of these, 1,200 duplicate articles were excluded. Among the remaining 1,785 after analysis, 1,605 were excluded with the reading of titles and abstract. Among 180 articles eligible by the evaluators, 150 were excluded by the established exclusion criteria. Finally, 30 articles were included in this review, as shown in Figure I.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIO

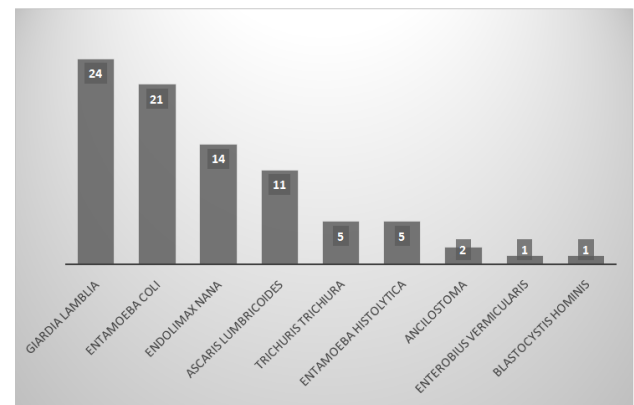
We can highlight that intestinal parasitosis are not compulsory notification diseases in Brazilian states, and data on the true frequency of these infections are somewhat unknown. National data on intestinal parasites are restricted to specific locations as a priority by the Ministry of Health (TEIXEIRA *et al.*, 2020). In some epidemiological studies such as Andrade *et al.* (2010) reports surveys carried out in Brazilian states, in São Paulo carried out with random samples in children under five years of age, at least one species of parasite was found in approximately 70%, with *Trichuris trichiura* and *Giardia intestinalis*, Graph I shows the highest incidence of giardia lamblia parasitosis in studies such as Alves *et al.* (2015),

Fernandes *et al.* (2011), Reuter (2015), Goncalves *et al.* (2011), Barbosa *et al.* (2017), Souza *et al.* (2015), Fonseca *et al.* (2018), Cardoso *et al.* (2019), Araújo *et al.* (2018) report this incidence.



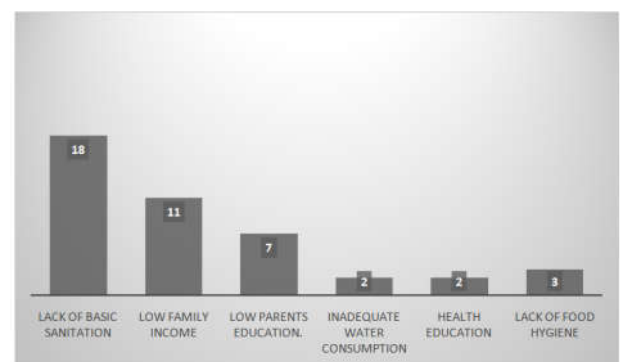
Source: Prepared by the Authors.

Figure I. Flowchart of selection of scientific articles for systematic review



Source: Prepared by the Authors

Graph 1. Incidence of Intestinal Parasitosis in Children in Brazil, based on table 1 (n=30)



Graph 2. Main factors associated the incidence of intestinal parasites in children based on table 3 (n=30)

Table 2. Incidence of parasites by region according to the studies in table 1 (N=28).

REGIONS OF BRAZIL	FREQUENT PARASITES	STUDIES
NORTH	Endolimax nana Trichuris trichiura Entamoeba coli	Dias et al Baptista et al Cardoso et al
NORTHEAST	Endolimax nana	Carvalho et al Cardoso et al Silva et al
CENTRAL-WEST	Giardia lamblia	Araújo et al
SOUTHEAST	Giardia lamblia	Alves et al Fonseca et al Fernandes et al Goncalves et al Barbosa et al
SOUTH	Giardia lamblia Endolimax nana	Abreu et al Souza et al Reuter et al Antunes et al Camello et al Andrade et al.

Source: Prepared by the Authors

Table 3. Articles with object of study Intestinal parasites and their main factors associated with incidence (n=30)

FACTORS ASSOCIATED THE INCIDENCE	TARGET POPULATION	REFERENCES
Lack of basic sanitation and education.	Children	Alves et al. (2015)
Low education of the mother, domestic animals at home.	Children 0-3 yearsold	Fonseca et al (2018)
Poverty, Lack of basic sanitation and education.	General population	Andrade et al (2010)
Increasing age, sanitary installation.	Childrenand teenagers	Belo et al (2012)
Lack of basic sanitation	General population	Busato et al (2014)
Low education of the mother, low family income, garbage close to home.	Children 5-14 yearsold	Fonseca et al (2010)
The increase in the children is age, the time span of the last appointment	Children 2-10 yearsold	Rodrigues et al (2018)
Low education of the mother, lack of basic sanitation and body hygiene, water supply.	Children 4-12 yearsold	Coutinho et al (2011)
Socioeconomic, sanitary and basic sanitation conditions, low HDI.	Children 2-10 yearsold	Silva et al (2014)
Family socioeconomic status and sanitary conditions in the houses.	Children	Cardoso et al (2019)
Well water consumption, destination of faecal waste, family income, parents education	Children 0-5 yearsold	Dias et al (2010)
Lack of basic sanitation and sanitary conditions.	Children 3-12 yearsold	Júnior et al (2016)
Inadequate water consumption and socioeconomic conditions.	Children 1-3 yearsold	Andrade et al (2017)
Socioeconomic conditions	Children 0-6 yearsold	Silva et al (2015)
Lack of health education and better living conditions.	Children 2-6 yearsold	Santos et al (2012)
Socioeconomic conditions and lack of health education	Children	Goncalves et al (2011)
Low family income and lack of basic sanitation.	Children	Sousa et al (2019)
Lack of basic sanitation and personal hygiene.	Children 1-4 yearsold	Araújo et al (2018)
Lack of basic sanitation, personal hygiene and poor food hygiene.	Childrenand Young	Baptista et al (2013)
Lack of basic sanitation	Children 6-12 yearsold	Carvalho et al (2014)
Habit of walking barefoot, eating habits and personal hygiene.	Children 0-12 yearsold	Silva et al (2016)
Lack of knowledge about intestinal parasites.	Children 0-13 yearsold	Camello et al (2016)
Socioeconomic, hygienic and cultural conditions.	Children 0-6 yearsold	Fernandes et al (2011)
Low parents education, lack of basic sanitation, inadequate water consumption.	Children	Reuter et al (2015)
Socioeconomic, environmental and sanitary conditions.	Children 1-3 yearsold	Antunes et al (2017)
Lack of basic sanitation and socioeconomic conditions.	Children 3-10 yearsold	Cardoso et al (2020)
Lack of basic sanitation and socioeconomic conditions.	Children 6-14 yearsold	Cardoso et al (2010)
Personaland food hygiene	Children	Silva et al (2018)
healtheducation	Children 4-7 yearsold	Barbosa et al (2017)
Lack of basic sanitation, health education.	Children 0-5 yearsold	Macena et al (2016)

Source: Prepared by the Authors.

Among the main reasons are the lack of basic sanitation, educational level, socioeconomic and hygienic conditions, inadequate consumption of water and domestic animals at home. In table II the incidences of parasites were separated by regions according to the studies used in the systematic review, in the north and northeast regions the highest incidence was endolimax nana, among the main factors are the consumption of well water, destination of faecal waste, low family income, low parental education. In the south and southeast, the parasite with the highest incidence was giardia lamblia due to lack of basic sanitation, socioeconomic conditions and domestic animals in homes. The results achieved in this review indicate that intestinal parasites in children still remain an important public health problem in Brazil, and the measures currently used for eradication and control are still insufficient. To reduce the rates of parasitic infections, it is necessary to improve multidisciplinary actions and strategies, especially in poorer areas with more difficult access to basic health care.

CONCLUSION

Most of the population, especially children who live in precarious conditions of basic sanitation, housing, water supply and lack of personal and collective hygiene habits, are the most likely to acquire parasitic infections. Therefore, there is a need to formulate and apply intersectoral policy measures that guarantee universal access to health services and the promotion of health and environmental education projects applied mainly to the children is parents. The research evidenced the presence of a direct relationship between the frequency

of intestinal parasitosis in children and socioeconomic factors, especially the presence of a sewage system, piped water supply and the mothers is education level. These aspects end up reflecting on the environment in which children live. That way, it is extremely important to investigate the incidence and factors associated with intestinal parasites in children from different regions of Brazil, to organize and plan health actions, aiming at better prevention, treatment and diagnosis of parasitic infections. It is concluded that the socioeconomic and sanitary conditions of the housing, people and environment in which the children are located are the main factors and can significantly contribute to a greater incidence of intestinal parasites and the need for improvements in the planning of institutions government and health. It is also not enough just basic sanitation conditions or public policies, there is also a need for educational practices and guidance on intestinal parasites.

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