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86% OF CHIKUNGUNYA PATIENTS IN A SPANISH COHORT REPORT INTENSE JOINT PAIN EVEN MONTHS AFTER INFECTION

An analysis published in *Travel Medicine and Infectious Diseases* shows that 86% of travelers who returned to Spain with **chikungunya** infection reported joint pain on a period of over 2 years, this significantly reducing life quality.

Researchers from La Paz-Carlos III University Hospital in Madrid, Spain evaluated travelers who visited countries in **Latin America** from April 2014 to September 2016 during mosquito-borne virus outbreaks. The average age of the 119 travelers was 41 years, 67.2% were men, and only 25.6% had a travel medicine consultation before departure.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the chikungunya **vaccine** for adults in November 2023, and in February 2024, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended the vaccine for certain travelers to affected regions and laboratory personnel testing for chikungunya.

The most common **symptoms** of chikungunya are fever and **joint pain**, with pain lasting from a few days to years. In unusual cases, death can occur, typically in older adults or children under 1 year old.

On average, the 102 patients with joint pain (86%) reported pain for 129.4 days (4 months).

Risk factors for chronic joint pain included female sex, return from a country with high infection incidence, older age, more than four symptoms during the acute episode, high viral load, pain in previously affected tendons or joints, and positive results for certain laboratory markers.

Patients with chronic joint pain had to significantly **adapt** their normal daily activities, with 42.6% reporting recurrence of symptoms after the initial remission. Recurring symptoms improved substantially after patients were prescribed personalized therapies.

The conclusions of this study highlight the need for measures such as specialized medical counseling before traveling to risk areas, effective patient management in specialized infectious disease units along with early diagnosis and treatment, and the development of interdisciplinary recommendations to assist doctors in treating patients and improving outcomes.

Adapted after Mary Van Beusekom, 15 May 2024

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