



Rickettsial diseases –An Overview

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Introduction. Rickettsiae are a diverse group of obligate intracellular gram negative bacteria found in ticks, lice, fleas, chiggers, mites and mammals. They include the genera: Rickettsiae, Ehrlichia, Orientia, and Coxiella. They are maintained in nature through a cycle with mammals and arthropod vectors as reservoirs.

Methods. The public health impact of these on lives or productivity across the globe is actually very high. The rickettsial diseases are reemerging and found in at least 11 states of India. Lack of good diagnostic tools for Rickettsia results in underreporting or no diagnosis.

Results. Rickettsioses are very difficult to diagnose clinically as well as in the laboratory. High clinical suspicion, better clinical acumen and use of best diagnostic tools will result in appropriate and fast diagnosis of Rickettsial diseases. IgM ELISA and/or DNA PCR are highly reliable and preferred tests. Newer rickettsial diseases, like tick-borne lymphadenopathy (TIBOLA) and Dermacentor borne necrosis eschar lymphadenopathy (DEBONEL), have also been reported. Doxycycline, tetracycline and chloramphenicol are effective against Rickettsiae.

Conclusions. Rickettsial diseases are one of the important causes of cases pyrexia of unknown origin (PUO). Weil-Felix test is very helpful in diagnosis of Rickettsiae, even if advanced diagnostic facilities are not available. High clinical suspicion is the key.