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DISSERTATION

Morbidität, Lebensqualitätsbeeinträchtigung und Therapie der Hakenwurm-
assoziierten kutanen larva migrans in verarmten Gemeinden in Manaus,
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Inhaltsverzeichnis

<i>Zusammenfassung</i>	1
<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Einleitung</i>	3
<i>Zielsetzung</i>	4
<i>Material und Methoden</i>	4
Studiengebiet und Studienpopulation	4
Studiendesign.....	5
Datenanalyse	6
Ethische Aspekte.....	7
<i>Ergebnisse</i>	7
Klinische Pathologie bei HrCLM Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie	7
Lebensqualität bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie	10
KAP Studie	11
<i>Diskussion</i>	12
Klinische Pathologie bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie	12
Lebensqualität bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie	13
KAP Studie	15
Zusammenfassung.....	17
<i>Abkürzungsverzeichnis</i>	17
<i>Literaturverzeichnis</i>	18
<i>Eidesstattliche Versicherung</i>	21
<i>Anteilserklärung an den erfolgten Publikationen</i>	22
<i>Lebenslauf</i>	23
<i>Publikationsliste</i>	25
<i>Danksagung</i>	26

Zusammenfassung

Hintergrund: Die Hakenwurm-assoziierte kutane larva migrans (HrCLM) ist in Entwicklungsländern häufig. Die Erkrankung wird durch in der Epidermis umherwandernde tierpathogene Hakenwurmlarven verursacht und führt zu starkem Juckreiz und dadurch bedingter Schlaflosigkeit. Die Auswirkung von HrCLM auf die hautbezogene Lebensqualität sowie der Rückgang der Morbidität nach Therapie mit Ivermectin wurden bisher nicht in einem endemischen Gebiet untersucht.

Methoden: HrCLM-Patienten wurden durch aktive Suche in 7 Armsiedlungen in Manaus, Brasilien, identifiziert. Die Diagnose wurde klinisch gestellt. Die hautbezogene Lebensqualität wurde anhand des modifizierten *dermatology life quality index (mDLQI)* bestimmt. Die klinische Pathologie wurde semiquantitativ anhand eines Schweregradindexes evaluiert. Die Patienten wurden mit Ivermectin (200 µg/kg) behandelt und nach 2 sowie 4 Wochen erneut untersucht. Des Weiteren wurden Wissen sowie krankheitsbezogenes Verhalten über HrCLM von Müttern betroffener Kinder in einer Fokusgruppendiskussion (FGD) untersucht.

Ergebnisse: 92 HrCLM-Patienten wurden in die Studie eingeschlossen. Vor Therapie wiesen 91,5 % der Patienten eine deutliche Reduktion der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität auf; der mediane *mDLQI* betrug 5 von 24 Punkten (IQR 3–8). Der mediane Schweregradindex lag bei von 10 Punkten (IQR 3–6), der Schweregradindex korrelierte mit der Einschränkung der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität ($\rho = 0,76$, $p = 0,001$). 4 Wochen nach Therapie kam es zu einer signifikanten Reduktion der sichtbaren HrCLM Läsionen sowie zu einer signifikanten Besserung der klinischen Symptome und der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität. In den FGD beschrieben die Mütter der von HrCLM betroffenen Kinder die Erkrankung als sehr beeinträchtigend und mit starkem Einfluss auf das Familienleben.

Zusammenfassung: In Armsiedlungen in Manaus zeigten die meisten HrCLM Patienten eine deutliche Morbidität und starke Einschränkung ihrer Lebensqualität. Die Einmaltherapie mit Ivermectin reduzierte die klinischen Pathologie und die Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität nach 2 und 4 Wochen. In der FGD bestätigte sich die Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität. Obwohl die Mütter HrCLM bedingte Risikofaktoren identifizierten, hatten sie aufgrund der verarmten Lebensbedingung keine Möglichkeit der Prävention und behandelten die Kinder mit inadäquaten Hausmitteln.

Abstract

Background: Hookworm related cutaneous larva migrans (HrCLM) is common in the developing world. The disease is caused by the migration of animal hookworm larvae in the epidermis and is associated with pruritus and pruritus associated insomnia. The impact of HrCLM on skin disease-associated life quality and the regression of morbidity after ivermectin therapy have never been studied in an endemic setting.

Methods: HrCLM-patients were identified through active case finding in 7 slums in Manaus, Brazil. Patients were diagnosed clinically. Skin disease associated life quality was assessed using the modified dermatology life quality index (*mDLQI*). Clinical pathology was determined in a semi-quantitative manner using a severity score. Patients were treated with ivermectin (200 μ g/kg) and were followed-up 2 and 4 weeks after treatment. Additionally, knowledge, attitudes and practices in mothers of HrCLM- affected children was assessed through a focus group discussion (FGD).

Results: 92 HrCLM-patients were included in the study. Before therapy, 91.5% showed a considerable reduction of their skin associated life quality; the median *mDLQI* was 5 out of 24 points (IQR 3-8). The median severity score was 4 out of 10 points (IQR 3-6), the severity of infection correlated with the degree of skin associated life quality impairment ($\rho = 0.76$, $p = 0.001$). 4 weeks after treatment the number of visible HrCLM tracks had decreased significantly, clinical symptoms and life quality impairment had improved significantly. In the FGDs, mothers described HrCLM as a severely distressing condition with considerable impact on family life.

Conclusions: In an impoverished community in Manaus most HrCLM-patients showed important morbidity and severe life quality impairment. A single dose of ivermectin significantly reduced clinical pathology and life quality impairment within 2 to 4 weeks. In the FGD, life quality impairment was confirmed. Even though the mothers were able to indicate HrCLM-related risk factors, they had, due to their poor life conditions, no opportunity to translate them into prevention and treated their children with inadequate domestic remedies.

Einleitung

Die kutane larva migrans wurde erstmals 1784 unter der Bezeichnung „creeping eruption“ (Hautmaulwurf) morphologisch beschrieben [1]. Der pathogenetische Zusammenhang mit tierpathogenen Nematoden wurde jedoch erst Ende der 1920er Jahre belegt [2]. Mittlerweile ist bekannt, dass verschiedene Tierhakenwurmspezies, u. a. *Ancylostoma braziliense*, *A. caninum*, *Uncinaria stenocephala* und *Bunostomum phlebotomum*, das klinische Bild einer „creeping eruption“ verursachen [3-5]. Deshalb hat sich die Bezeichnung Hakenwurm-assoziierte kutane larva migrans, im englischen *hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans*, (HrCLM) durchgesetzt [6].

Die adulten Hakenwürmer leben im Duodenum von Hunden und Katzen [7, 8]. Durch Defäkation gelangen embryonierte Hakenwurmeier auf den Boden. In warmem und feuchtem Klima entwickeln sich aus den embryonierten Eiern innerhalb einer Woche infektiöse Larven [9]. Kommt unbedeckte Haut mit kontaminiertem Boden in Kontakt, penetrieren die Hakenwurmlarven perkutan. Im Gegensatz zu *Ancylostoma duodenale* und *Necator americanus*, den beiden wichtigsten humanpathogenen Hakenwurmspezies, können tierpathogene Hakenwurmlarven die Basalmembran nicht passieren und verbleiben somit im Kompartiment der Epidermis, in dem sie ziellos umherwandern. Die Komplettierung des Lebenszyklus ist somit nicht möglich, und die Larven sterben nach Wochen oder Monaten ab [7, 10].

Morphologisch stellt sich die HrCLM als ein schlangenlinienförmiger leicht erhabener und geröteter Gang dar, in dem sich die Larve unregelmäßig fortbewegt [6, 7] und der von starkem Juckreiz begleitet wird. Häufig kommt es durch Kratzen zu einer Superinfektion der Läsion [11].

HrCLM ist in Tropen und Subtropen weit verbreitet [12]. Die Erkrankung ist mit Armut assoziiert und ist daher in Entwicklungsländern weit verbreitet. Sie zählt zu den sogenannten vernachlässigten Tropenkrankheiten (*neglected tropical diseases, NTD's*) [13]. Die HrCLM wird einerseits von der tropenmedizinischen Wissenschaft [14], andererseits durch das Personal medizinischer Einrichtungen vor Ort vernachlässigt [15]. Zur psychosozialen Beeinträchtigung durch HrCLM gibt es bisher keine Kenntnisse. Klinische Studien in Endemiegebieten legen nahe, dass die HrCLM zu einem erheblichen Leidensdruck führt [11, 15].

Daten über globale Krankheitshäufigkeit und räumliche Verteilung der HrCLM gibt es nicht [16]. In epidemiologischen Studien konnte eine deutliche saisonale Inzidenzzunahme in der Regenzeit festgestellt werden [17, 18]. Wie bei anderen Hakenwurmerkrankungen besteht die höchste Prävalenz in der Kindheit und Jugend [13]. In einer Studie im Nordosten Brasiliens lag die Prävalenz bei 4 % in der allgemeinen Bevölkerung und bei 15 % bei Kindern [18, 19]. Sporadische Fälle und Kleinepidemien wurden auch in Europa beschrieben [20, 21].

Zielsetzung

Die vorliegende Dissertation hat drei Ziele: Zunächst soll die klinische Pathologie vor und nach Behandlung mit Ivermectin dokumentiert werden. Des Weiteren soll die Lebensqualität von Patienten mit HrCLM vor und nach Behandlung mit Ivermectin bestimmt werden. Schließlich soll das Wissen der Betroffenen über die Erkrankung, sowie über präventive und therapeutische Maßnahmen erfasst werden.

Material und Methoden

Studiengebiet und Studienpopulation

Die Studie wurde in Manaus, der Hauptstadt des Bundesstaates Amazonas in Nordbrasiliens, zwischen Oktober 2008 und Mai 2009 durchgeführt. Die Patienten wurden über lokale Gesundheitszentren (*casinhas de saúde*) und Nachbarschaftsorganisationen identifiziert. Sie stammten aus sieben Armensiedlungen, sogenannten *invasões*. Alle *invasões* liegen an kleinen Zuflüssen des Amazonas (*igarapés*). Die meisten Häuser sind aus Holz, gebrauchtem Blech oder Plastik gebaut und stehen auf Stelzen, sogenannte *palaftas*. Die Straßen und Wege sind nicht asphaltiert, Katzen und Hunde streunen herum. Müll wird in der Regel in den *igarapés* oder unterhalb der Stelzenhäuser entsorgt. Es gibt keine Abwasserentsorgung und die Trinkwasserversorgung ist unzureichend. In der Regenzeit treten die *igarapés* regelmäßig über die Ufer. Das Hochwasser verteilt Müll und Exkreme von Mensch und Tier unter den Häusern und auf Straßen. Kinder und Jugendliche spielen meist barfuß auf den Straßen und Plätzen. In den meisten Häusern leben Familien mit 6–8 Mitgliedern auf sehr beengtem Raum, alleinerziehende Mütter und Patchwork-Familienkonstellationen sind häufig. Analphabetismus, Arbeitslosigkeit, Gewalt, Alkohol- und Drogenmissbrauch sind typische Merkmale aller *invasões*. Die finanzielle Situation der Bewohner ist prekär.

Studiendesign

In der Studie zur Lebensqualität wurden 91 Patienten eingeschlossen, während die Untersuchung zur klinischen Pathologie vor und nach Ivermectintherapie mit 92 Patienten durchgeführt wurde. Die Studienpopulation der beiden Untersuchungen überschneidet sich weitgehend. Die Einschlusskriterien waren mindestens eine aktive HrCLM-Läsion, Alter ≥ 5 Jahre, Ausschluss einer Schwangerschaft, sowie jeweils vollständig ausgefüllte Fragebögen. Die körperliche Untersuchung wurde unter Wahrung der Privatsphäre in einem geschlossenen Raum bei guten Lichtverhältnissen durchgeführt. Minderjährige wurden nur in Anwesenheit eines Elternteils oder gesetzlichen Vertreters untersucht. Der genitale Bereich wurde nur nach Einwilligung der Eltern und des Kindes untersucht. Die Hautoberfläche wurde in eine linke und rechte Hälfte unterteilt, jede Hälfte wurde dann in weitere 14 Areale gegliedert [22]. Eine HrCLM wurde bei Vorfinden des charakteristischen serpentinenförmigen Larvengangs diagnostiziert. Die Anzahl und Lokalisation der Larvengänge wurden dokumentiert. Jeden Larvengang werteten wir als einzelne Läsion und differenzierten sie als simpel oder komplex. Als simpler Larvengang galt eine Läsion ohne deutliche bakterielle Superinfektion oder Inflammation. Als komplexer Larvengang definierten wir eine Läsion mit Exkoration, Entzündungszeichen oder Zeichen einer Superinfektion. Läsionen wurden zudem in papuläre, noduläre und verkrustete Läsionstypen unterteilt. Als Indikatoren einer bakteriellen Superinfektion galt die Präsenz von Pusteln, Abszess oder Suppuration. Andere Ektoparasitosen schlossen wir anhand der klinischen Untersuchung aus.

Die Intensität der HrCLM wurde semiquantitativ anhand eines Schweregradindex mit folgenden Variablen erfasst: Anzahl der Larvengänge (1–2 Larvengänge: 1 Punkt, 3–5 Larvengänge: 2 Punkte, 6–9 Larvengänge: 3 Punkte, ≥ 10 Larvengänge: 4 Punkte), Präsenz von Superinfektion (0/2 Punkte), Zeichen lokaler Inflammation, Schmerzen oder noduläre Läsionen (1–3 Punkte), lokale Lymphknotenschwellung (0/1 Punkt). Der Index kann zwischen 1 und 10 Punkten variieren.

Zur Evaluation der Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität verwendeten wir den *Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI)* [23] und adaptierten diesen entsprechend kultureller und krankheitsspezifischer Besonderheiten [24]. Daraus resultierte der *modifizierte Dermatology Life Quality Index (mDLQI)*, welcher acht Kategorien von Lebensqualitätseinschränkung berücksichtigt: Juckreiz, Schlaflosigkeit, Schamgefühl, Änderung der Bekleidungsgewohnheiten, Probleme bei der Arbeit/Schule, Probleme in der Freizeitgestaltung, Probleme bei persönlicher Interaktion, Probleme mit der Sexualität (ausschließlich Erwachsene), Hänselei (ausschließlich Kinder). Zu jeder Aussage variieren die

Antwortmöglichkeiten zwischen 0 (absolut nicht) und 3 (sehr stark) Punkten. Daraus summiert sich die maximale Punktzahl auf 24 Punkte. Als eine relevante Einschränkung der Lebensqualität definierten wir einen $mDLQI \geq 2$. Des Weiteren wurden die Symptome Juckreiz, Juckreiz-assoziierte Schlaflosigkeit und Schmerz anhand einer visuellen Analogskala erfasst. Jeder Teilnehmer wurde einmal mit Ivermectin per os (200 µg/kg KG; Revectina Solvay Farma Ltda, São Paulo, Brasilien) behandelt, die Untersuchungen und Befragungen wurden 2 und 4 Wochen nach Therapie erneut durchgeführt. Im Falle einer Reinfestation im Beobachtungszeitraum wurden die Patienten von der Datenauswertung ausgeschlossen.

Des Weiteren wurden Wissen und krankheitsbezogenes Verhalten (*Knowledge, Attitude and Practice, KAP*) mit Hilfe von Fokusgruppendiskussionen (FGD) erfasst. FGD sind eine effektive qualitative Methode zur Erfassung von Wissen und dessen Umsetzung in die Praxis [25]. Diese Methode wird zunehmend auch im tropenmedizinischen Bereich angewandt [26]. Da in den Armensiedlungen von Manaus Mütter primär für die Kindererziehung verantwortlich sind und entsprechend früheren epidemiologischen Studien Kinder mehrheitlich von HrCLM betroffen sind, wurde die KAP-Studie mit Müttern von Kindern mit HrCLM durchgeführt. Alle Mütter von Kindern mit HrCLM in den Bezirken *Bairro da União* und *Nova Vitória*, die bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt in die Studie zur klinischen Pathologie eingeschlossen waren, wurden eingeladen, an einer FGD teilzunehmen. Insgesamt beteiligten sich 20 Mütter, 10 aus *Bairro da União* und 10 aus *Nova Vitória*. Die FGD wurden sonntags in einem Raum der Gemeinde durchgeführt. Zu Beginn erklärten wir den Teilnehmerinnen Ziele und Methoden einer FGD. Als Anstoß für eine Diskussion zu einem bestimmten Aspekt der HrCLM stellten wir offene Fragen in den Raum. Die Diskussion wurde mit Audiorekordern aufgezeichnet und vollständig von einer Muttersprachlerin transkribiert, gruppendynamische Prozesse während der Diskussion dokumentierten wir schriftlich.

Datenanalyse

Die transkribierten Tonaufnahmen der KAP-Studie wurden nach Mayring [27] analysiert. Zunächst wurden sich wiederholende und themenfremde Inhalte ausgeschlossen, in einem zweiten Schritt diffuse oder widersprüchliche Aussagen geklärt und in einem dritten Schritt die Inhalte in Kategorien und Unterkategorien geordnet. Die Kategorien wurden zur Verbesserung der Validität [28] unabhängig voneinander von 2 Forscherinnen erstellt und in einem weiteren Schritt wieder zusammengeführt. Schließlich fassten wir die Inhalte jeder Kategorie zusammen und illustrierten sie anhand von Beispielen.

Die Daten der klinischen Untersuchung des *mDLQI* wurden in einer *Epi Info Datenbank* (Version 3.4.3 CDC Atlanta, USA) gespeichert und auf Eingabefehler überprüft. Die Auswertung erfolgte mit *SPSS* für *Windows* (Version 16.0; SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois). Da zahlreiche Variablen nicht normalverteilt waren, wurden Median und die Interquartilabstände (IQR) als Indikatoren für zentrale Tendenz und Dispersion der Daten genutzt. Zur Bestimmung der Korrelation von Ordinalvariablen wurde der Spearman-Rangkorrelationskoeffizient berechnet. Relative Häufigkeiten wurden anhand des Chi-Quadrat-Tests verglichen. Unabhängige ordinalskalierte Werte verglichen wir mit dem Mann-Whitney-U-Test, für paarweise Vergleiche nutzen wir den Wilcoxon-Vorzeichen-Rang-Test.

Ethische Aspekte

Die Ziele und Maßnahmen der Studie wurden jedem Teilnehmer – oder im Falle von Minderjährigen, den gesetzlichen Vertretern – mündlich in einfachem und verständlichem Portugiesisch erklärt. Fragen der Patienten wurden detailliert beantwortet und das Recht auf jederzeitiges Ausscheiden aus der Studie betont. Jeder Teilnehmer – oder sein gesetzlicher Vertreter – gab eine schriftliche Einverständniserklärung ab. Schwangere und Kinder unter fünf Jahren wurden nicht in die Studie aufgenommen, jedoch mit Thiabendazolsalbe behandelt. Im Falle anderer Hauterkrankungen überwiesen wir die Patienten an die *Fundaçao de Medicina Tropical do Amazonas (FMT-AM)*, wo sie kostenfrei behandelt wurden. Die Studie wurde durch die Ethikkommission der FMT-AM geprüft und genehmigt.

Ergebnisse

Klinische Pathologie bei HrCLM Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie

Die demographischen und klinischen Charakteristika des Patientenkollektivs sind in Tabelle 1 zusammengefasst.

Tabelle 1 Klinische und demographische Charakteristika der Patienten vor Therapie (n = 92)

Charakteristikum	n	(%)	Charakteristikum	n	(%)
Alter in Jahren (Median; Min-Max)	9,5 (5–55)		Länge des Larvenganges in cm (Median; Min-Max)	3 (1–20)	
Geschlecht m/f	64	(69,9)	Anzahl betroffenen Körperareale (Median; Min-Max)	2 (1–9)	
	28	(30,4)			
Anzahl der Larvengänge (Median; Min-Max)	2 (1–51)		Tage seit Auftreten der Läsion ^b		
Schweregradindex (Median/IQR ^a)	4 (3–6)		1–7 Tage	34	(37,0)
			8–28 Tage	47	(51,0)
			>28 Tage	11	(12,0)

^a IQR = Interquartilabstand

^b im Falle multipler Läsionen wurde die Erstmanifestation der ersten Läsion berücksichtigt.

Die 92 Patienten wiesen insgesamt 441 Larvengänge auf, 139 (31,5 %) davon waren simpel, während die übrigen 302 (68,5 %) komplexe Läsionen waren. Die weiteren Charakteristika der Läsionen und assoziierte Symptome sind in Tabelle 2 zusammengefasst.

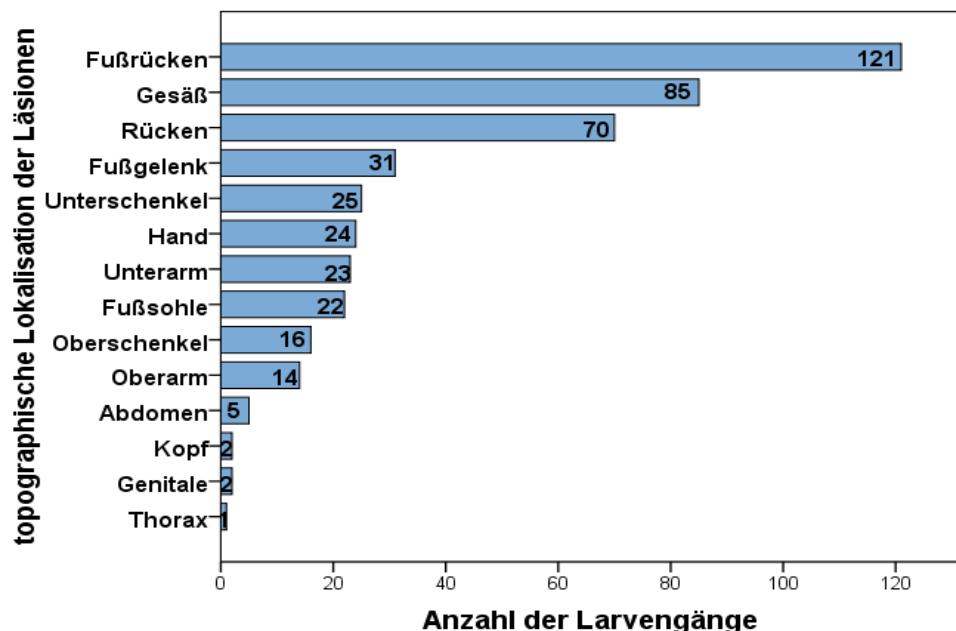
Tabelle 2 Morphologie der Läsionen, lokale und allgemeine Symptome

Charakteristika der Läsionen ^a	(%)	Assoziierte Symptome ^a	(%)
Simple Läsionen	139/441 (31,5)	Juckreiz	85 (92,4)
Komplexe Läsionen	302/441 (68,5)	Schlaflosigkeit	65 (70,7)
Verkrustete Läsionen	285/441 (64,5)	Erythem	60 (65,2)
Exkorierte Läsionen	243/441 (55,1)	Lokale Lymphadenopathie	53 (57,6)
Superinfizierte Läsionen	30/441 (6,5)	Schmerz	2885 (30,7)
Papuläre Läsionen	24/441 (5,4)	Schwellung	17 (18,2,)
Noduläre Läsionen	12/441 (2,7)		

^a Mehrfachklassifizierungen sind möglich

Juckreiz war bei 85 (92,4 %) der Patienten vorhanden, bei 45 (53 %) trat ein moderater bis schwerer Juckreiz auf. Juckreiz-assoziierte Schlaflosigkeit bestand bei 65 (70,7 %) der Patienten, bei 36 (55,0 %) waren die Beschwerden moderat bis schwer, weitere Symptome waren Schwellung, Erythem, lokale Lymphadenopathie und Schmerzen (Tabelle 2). Graphik 1 zeigt die topographische Verteilung der Läsionen.

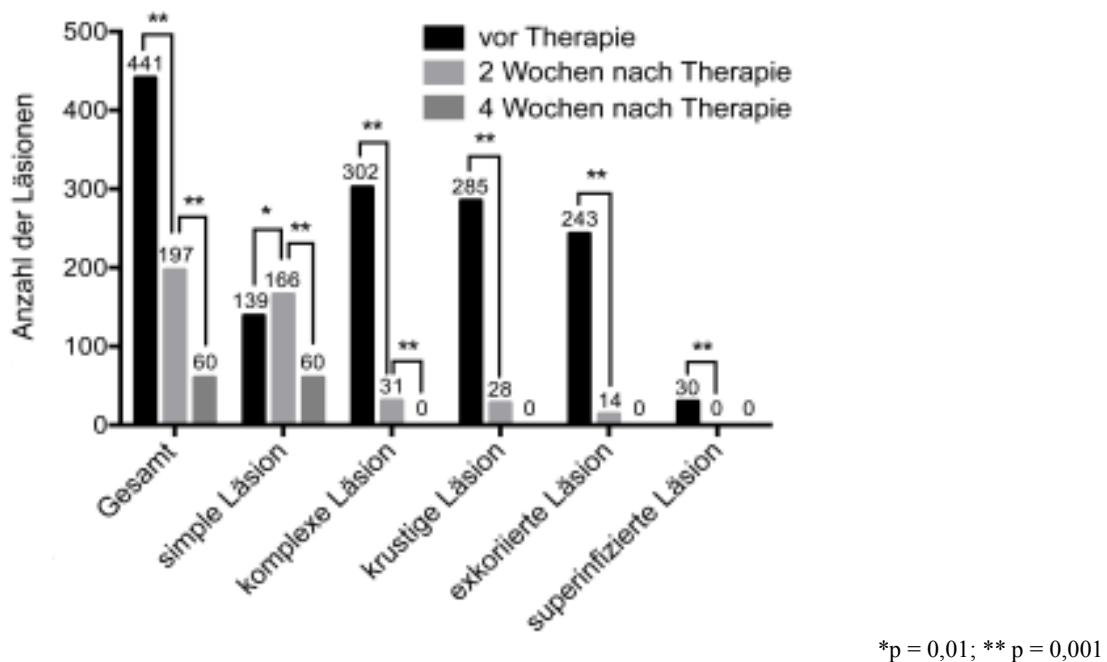
Graphik 1 Topographische Verteilung der Läsionen



Der Schweregrad der HrCLM Infestationen war im Durchschnitt moderat (Median 4; Min-Max 1–10). Der HrCLM-Schweregrad korreliert mit der Intensität des Juckreizes ($\rho = 0,274$; $p = 0,010$), der Intensität der Schlafstörung ($\rho = 0,283$; $p = 0,008$), sowie mit der Intensität des Schmerzes ($\rho = 0,449$; $p < 0,001$). Des Weiteren bestand eine signifikante Korrelation zwischen der Intensität des Juckreizes und der Intensität der Schlafstörung ($\rho = 0,642$; $p < 0,001$).

2 und 4 Wochen nach Therapie mit Ivermectin kam es zu einem signifikanten Rückgang der Beschwerden: Juckreiz, Juckreiz-assoziierte Schlaflosigkeit und Schmerz. Juckreiz, initial von 92 % der Patienten angegeben, reduzierte sich auf 33 % nach 2 Wochen und auf 3 % nach 4 Wochen (beide $p \leq 0,001$). Bei Juckreiz-assoziierten Schlaflosigkeit kam es zu einem Rückgang der Beschwerden von 73 % auf 24 % nach 2 Wochen und 0 % nach 4 Wochen (beide $p \leq 0,001$). HrCLM-assoziierte Schmerzen gingen von 33 % auf 9.2 % und 0 % nach 2 bzw. 4 Wochen zurück (beide $p \leq 0,001$). Nach Therapie mit Ivermectin kam es zu einem Rückgang der Gesamtanzahl der Läsionen sowie der einzelnen Läsionstypen, lediglich die Anzahl der simplen Läsionen stieg nach 2 Wochen an (Graphik 2).

Graphik 2 Anzahl und Morphologie der Läsionen vor und nach Behandlung mit Ivermectin



Lebensqualität bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie

91 Patienten konnten in die Studie zu hautbezogener Lebensqualität aufgenommen werden, 28 davon waren weiblich und 63 männlich. 10 Patienten wurden aufgrund von Reinfestation während des Beobachtungszeitraums von der Datenanalyse ausgeschlossen. Der Altersmedian lag bei 10 Jahren, die Altersspanne lag zwischen 5 und 44 Jahren. 60 (65 %) Patienten wiesen ≥ 2 Larvengänge auf, und 30 % aller Patienten hatten ≥ 5 Larvengänge. 88 % aller Larvengänge waren in den letzten 4 Wochen entstanden. 84 % aller Patienten hatten Läsionen an unbedeckten Hautarealen. 94,5 % wiesen eine relevante Einschränkung der dermatologischen Lebensqualität ($mDLQI \geq 2$) auf. Vor Therapie mit Ivermectin betrug der $mDLQI$ im Median 5 (IQR 3–8), bei Erwachsenen lag er bei 6 (IQR 3–9) und bei Kindern bei 5 (IQR 3–8) (Tabelle 3). Juckreiz, Schlaflosigkeit, Schamgefühl und die Änderung der Bekleidungsgewohnheiten waren die häufigsten Einschränkungen. Zwischen Mädchen und Jungen oder Frauen und Männern bestand kein signifikanter Unterschied in Bezug auf den $mDLQI$. Es bestand eine positive Korrelation zwischen der Einschränkung der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität und dem Schweregradindex ($\rho = 0,76$; $p < 0,001$) sowie zwischen Lebensqualität und der Anzahl betroffener Hautareale ($\rho = 0,30$, $p = 0,004$). Nach Therapie mit Ivermectin kam es bereits nach 2 Wochen zu einer Reduktion der Beeinträchtigung in den Bereichen Juckreiz, Schlafstörung, Schamgefühl und Veränderung der Bekleidungsgewohnheiten. Des Weiteren konnte nach 2 Wochen eine deutliche Verbesserung der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität festgestellt werden (Median $mDLQI = 5$ (IQR 3–8) versus 1 (IQR 0–3), $p = 0,001$). Nach 4 Wochen kam es zu einer weiteren Verbesserung der

hautbezogenen Lebensqualität (Median $mDLQI = 0$, $p = 0,001$) (Tabelle 3). Gleichzeitig reduzierte sich der Schweregradindex von 4 (IQR 3–6) auf 1 (IQR 1–1) Punkt nach 2 Wochen und auf 1 (IQR 0–1) Punkt nach 4 Wochen (beide $p = 0,001$).

Tabelle 3 Lebensqualität bei Erwachsenen und Kindern vor und nach Therapie mit Ivermectin (n=91)

Beeinträchtigung	Alle Patienten (n=91)	Erwachsene (n=11)	Kinder (n=80)	Kinder vs. Erwachsene	Beeinträchtigung nach Therapie		P-Wert vor Therapie vs nach Therapie	
	Vor Therapie				Nach 2 Wochen (n=60)	Nach 4 Wochen (n= 55)	Nach 2 Wochen	Nach 4 Wochen
Juckreiz n (%)	85 (93,4)	11 (100,0)	74 (92,5)	0,36	21 (35,0)	12 (21,8)	<0,001	<0,001
Schlafstörung n (%)	67 (73,6)	9 (81,8)	58 (72,5)	0,51	12 (20,0)	10 (18,3)	<0,001	<0,001
Schamgefühl n (%)	59 (64,8)	6 (54,5)	53 (66,3)	0,45	19 (31,7)	8 (14,5)	<0,001	<0,001
Veränderung der Bekleidung n (%)	31 (34,0)	3 (27,3)	28 (35,0)	0,61	11 (18,3)	4 (7,3)	0,018	0,018
Probleme bei der Arbeit / in der Schule n (%)	13 (14,9)	3 (42,9)	10 (12,5)	0,04	3 (3,4)	2 (2,3)	0,059	0,06
Veränderte Freizeit n (%)	24 (26,4)	5 (45,5)	19 (23,8)	0,13	11 (18,0)	11 (20,0)	0,168	0,64
Veränderte soziale Interaktion n (%)	13 (14,3)	4 (36,4)	9 (11,3)	0,03	5 (8,3)	3 (5,5)	0,083	0,014
$mDLQI$ Median	5	6	5	0,67	1	0	<0,001	<0,001
$mDLQI$ IQR ^a	3–8	3–9	3–8		0–3	0–2		

^aIQR = Interquartilabstand

KAP Studie

Die Mütter beschrieben HrCLM als eine „auf der Haut umherwandernde Mikrobe“ oder als „Mykose“ und vermuteten durch Katzen- und Hundeekremente kontaminierte Erdböden als Ursache für die Erkrankung. Als weitere Ursachen wurden Ratten, verschmutztes Wasser und unzureichende persönliche Hygiene benannt. Die Mütter vermuteten eine Übertragung von HrCLM über Hautkontakt mit kontaminiertem Sand bspw. beim barfüßigen Fußballspielen. Sie nahmen jedoch auch bei engem körperlichem Kontakt oder beim Kleidertausch zwischen den Geschwistern eine Übertragung von Mensch zu Mensch an. Juckreiz beschrieben die Mütter als wichtigstes Krankheitszeichen. Dieser sei vor allem nachts unerträglich. Das kontinuierliche Kratzen an den Läsionen und die daraus folgenden Exkorationen und Superinfektionen beschrieben sie als sehr beeinträchtigend. Die oftmals ausgedehnte postinflammatorische Hypopigmentation empfanden die Mütter als kosmetisch sehr störend. Einige Mütter berichteten, dass in der Regenzeit eine Läsion, kaum sei sie abgeheilt, von einer neuen gefolgt würde.

Als Therapie wurden verschiedene Hausmittel wie warmer Essig, Salzwasser, frittierte Zitronenscheiben, Eigenurin oder Tabak angewandt. Des Weiteren applizierten die Mütter unterschiedliche in der Apotheke erhältliche Produkte, zum Beispiel antimykotische Vaginalcreme, Talkum, Aceton, Bicarbonat, aber auch Desinfektionsmittel wie Alkohol oder Iod. Häufig wurden auch toxische Tierinsektizide auf die Haut gesprüht. Symptomlinderung werde durch die Anwendung von Eiswürfeln oder heißem Wachs erreicht. Die Mütter manipulierten – vor allem im Falle von Blasenbildung – die Larvengänge mit unsterilen scharfen Gegenständen, z. B. einem Messer oder einer Nadel. In schweren Fällen brachten die Mütter ihr Kind zu einem Gesundheitszentrum. Hier wurden die Patienten mit Thiabendazol topisch oder per os behandelt. Im Falle einer Superinfektion erhielten sie zudem ein orales Cephalosporin. Beides wurde als effektiv, aber teuer angesehen.

Diskussion

Klinische Pathologie bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie

Die klinische Pathologie der HrCLM ist bisher hauptsächlich an Reiserückkehrern untersucht worden. Diese wiesen meist eine milde Manifestation und häufig lediglich einzelne Läsionen auf [3, 5, 29]. Daher stammt vermutlich auch die verbreitete Annahme in infektionsmedizinischen Lehrbüchern, die HrCLM sei lediglich eine Lappalie [16]. In unserer Studie konnten wir nachweisen, dass HrCLM mit ausgeprägter klinischer Pathologie einhergeht. Im Patientenkollektiv waren 68,5 % aller Läsion komplex, in über 50 % der Fälle waren HrCLM-Läsionen mit Lymphadenopathie assoziiert. Dementsprechend klagten 30 % der Patienten über lokale Schmerzen im Rahmen einer lokalen Entzündungsreaktion. Wie in anderen Endemiegebieten war HrCLM sehr häufig von Juckreiz und Juckreiz-bedingter Schlaflosigkeit begleitet [11, 19]. In unserer Studie konnten wir nachweisen, dass der Schweregrad der HrCLM mit der Intensität des Juckreizes, der Schlafstörung sowie mit Schmerzen korreliert.

Zwei Drittel aller Patienten wiesen mehrere Larvengänge auf, bei 30,4 % waren es mehr als 5 Läsionen. Die Präsenz multipler Larvengänge war deutlich häufiger als in einem ländlichen Gebiet im Nordosten Brasiliens (69,9 % vs. 17.7 %) [11, 19], jedoch auch häufiger als in einer vergleichbaren urbanen Population ebenfalls im Nordosten Brasiliens (69,9 % vs. 43.2 %) [19]. Dies lässt sich anhand verschiedener Faktoren erklären: Einerseits ist das tropisch-feuchte Klima Amazoniens im Gegensatz zum semiariden Klima im Nordosten Brasiliens für Hakenwurmlarven förderlich. Andererseits gibt es in urbanen im Vergleich zu ländlichen Gebieten vermehrt streunende Katzen und Hunde und dementsprechend mehr

Tierexkreme. Außerdem sind die hygienischen Verhältnisse einer urbanen Favela vermutlich aufgrund von Übervölkerung prekärer als in auf dem Land.

In unserer Studienpopulation befanden sich die meisten Larvengänge an Unterschenkeln und Füßen sowie am Gesäß und am Rücken. Diese Ergebnisse entsprechen den Untersuchungen an Reiserückkehrern sowie einer Studie an einer ländlichen Population im Nordosten Brasiliens [3, 5, 11, 30]. In einem vergleichbaren Studiengebiet in einer urbanen Armsiedlung im Nordosten Brasiliens war die Mehrheit aller Läsionen jedoch am Thorax; Larvengänge an den Füßen kamen nicht vor. Die Autoren vermuteten eine Infestation über kontaminierte Kleidung und stellten die Nützlichkeit von geschlossenen Schuhen als Prophylaxe infrage [19]. In unserem Studienkollektiv konnten diese Resultate nicht reproduziert werden, allerdings kann man anhand eines malaysischen Fallberichts, in dem eine HrCLM Infestation über kontaminierte Socken beschrieben wird, die Frage stellen, inwiefern geschlossene Schuhe zur Prophylaxe dienlich sind [31].

2 Wochen nach Therapie mit Ivermectin waren bereits 65,3 % der Larvengänge nicht mehr nachweisbar. Es kam zu einem deutlichen Rückgang der krustigen, exkoriierten und superinfizierten Läsionen bei zeitgleichem Anstieg der simplen Läsionen. Den Übergang von einer komplexen in eine simple Läsion werteten wir als Ausdruck des Heilungsprozesses.

Nach 4 Wochen waren nur noch 13,6 % der Larvengänge vorhanden; krustige, exkoriierte und superinfizierte Läsionen waren nicht mehr nachweisbar. Der Rückgang der klinischen Pathologie korrelierte mit dem Rückgang des Schweregradindexes. Lokale Schmerzen und Juckreiz-assoziierte Schlaflosigkeit wurden 4 Wochen nach Ivermectintherapie nicht mehr angegeben. Nur 3 % der Patienten klagten 4 Wochen nach Therapie weiterhin über Juckreiz. Der schnelle und effektive Rückgang der klinischen Pathologie nach Ivermectintherapie entspricht den Studienergebnissen an Reiserückkehren mit meist milden HrCLM-Läsionen. Bei diesen konnten nach 2 bis 7 Tagen Heilungsraten von 97–100 % erreicht werden [7, 29, 32]. In endemischen Gebieten ist die Effektivität von Ivermectin bei HrCLM nur anhand von Prävalenzstudien im Rahmen von Massenbehandlungen untersucht [33, 34], die Dynamik der Regression der klinischen Pathologie ist bisher nicht analysiert worden.

Lebensqualität bei HrCLM-Patienten vor und nach Ivermectintherapie

Die Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität durch Hauterkrankungen vollzieht sich nicht nur auf rein somatischer Ebene. Insbesondere Erkrankungen, die mit auffälligen und sichtbaren Hautalterationen einhergehen, können zu sozialer Ausgrenzung führen [35]. Zudem kann es

aus – teils unbegründeter – Angst vor Ansteckung oder durch die Assoziation mit mangelnder Hygiene zu Stigmatisierung kommen [36, 37]. Während diese Phänomene bei dermatologischen Erkrankungen in entwickelten Ländern gut untersucht sind [38, 39], sind Lebensqualitätsstudien bei Erkrankungen parasitärer und infektiöser Genese in strukturschwachen Ländern sehr selten [40]. In unserer Studie war eine Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität bei 94,5 % der Patienten vorhanden. Im Median war die Beeinträchtigung moderat. Der *mDLQI* korrelierte mit der Anzahl der betroffenen Körperregionen, der Intensität der Infestation sowie mit der Anzahl der sichtbaren Läsionen. Des Weiteren konnte eine deutliche Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität durch Juckreiz, Juckreiz-assozierter Schlaflosigkeit, Schamgefühl sowie Änderung der Bekleidungsgewohnheiten festgestellt werden. Diese Beeinträchtigungen entsprechen den Aussagen der Mütter aus den Fokusgruppendiskussionen.

Studien zur Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität bei anderen Ektoparasiten sind bislang nur zur Skabies publiziert worden. In unserer Studie wiesen 94,5 % der HrCLM Patienten eine Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität ($mDLQI \geq 2$) auf, diese war im Median moderat. Diese Ergebnisse sind mit einer chinesischen Studie zur Skabies vergleichbar [41]. Im Gegensatz dazu war die Lebensqualitätsbeeinträchtigung einer vergleichbaren Population im Nordosten Brasiliens geringer: Nur 80 % der Skabiespatienten gaben eine Veränderung der Lebensqualität an, die Beeinträchtigung war in 65 % der Fälle gering bis moderat. Dieser Unterschied könnte unter anderem dadurch bedingt sein, dass die Skabiespatienten im Nordosten Brasiliens im Median eine eher milde Infestation aufwiesen und somit Juckreiz und Juckreiz-bedingte Schlaflosigkeit insgesamt weniger ausgeprägt waren [42]. Vergleicht man HrCLM mit anderen tropischen infektiösen Hauterkrankungen, zeigt sich bei der Onchozerkose und bei der kutanen Leishmaniose eine ähnlich ausgeprägte Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität [43, 44]. Die Lebensqualitätsbeeinträchtigung bei lymphatischer Filariose ist dagegen sehr variabel und hängt von der Ausdehnung des Lymphödems sowie von der Anzahl der Adenolymphangitis-Episoden ab [45-49].

Auf den ersten Blick erscheint die beachtliche Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität bei HrCLM-Patienten, die in einer Armensiedlung leben, paradox, da die Lebensqualität per se – aufgrund der sozialen und ökonomischen Lage der Patienten – als gering anzunehmen ist. Aus diesem Grund ist es aufschlussreich, die Faktoren zu identifizieren, welche maßgeblich zur Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität in diesem Setting beitragen.

Erstens besteht bei HrCLM ein starker Juckreiz. Dieser führte bei allen Erwachsenen und bei 92,5 % aller Kinder zu einer Beeinträchtigung und ist damit der wichtigste Faktor für die

Einschränkung der Lebensqualität. Neben der sensorischen Ebene des Juckreizes steht die Ausgrenzung durch das vom Umfeld bemerkte wiederholte Kratzen im Vordergrund [50]. Des Weiteren kann die affektive Komponente des Juckreizes einen Circulus vitiosus auslösen, indem die psychische Beeinträchtigung durch den Juckreiz diesen wiederum verstärken kann [50, 51]. Bemerkenswert ist, dass die Patienten nach 4 Wochen keinen Juckreiz und Juckreizbedingte Schlafstörungen mehr angaben, jedoch weiterhin subjektiv eine Beeinträchtigung durch diese Beschwerden beschrieben. Dies kann möglicherweise dadurch begründet sein, dass die affektive Komponente von Juckreiz und damit auch von Juckreiz-bedingter Schlafstörung auch nach Abklingen der realen Beschwerden persistiert und weiterhin beeinträchtigend wirkt.

Als zweithäufigste Beeinträchtigung wurde Schlaflosigkeit (74 %) genannt. Zunächst erscheint der Zusammenhang zwischen HrCLM und Schlaflosigkeit unwahrscheinlich, da man in einem sehr beengten und lauten Umfeld einer *invasão* per se keinen guten Schlaf vermutet. Die Tatsache, dass die Patienten nach Ivermectintherapie eine deutliche Verbesserung der Schlafqualität angeben, legt jedoch einen kausalen Zusammenhang zwischen HrCLM-bedingten Juckreiz und damit einhergehenden Schlafstörungen nahe.

Drittens kristallisierte sich Schamgefühl als einer der wichtigsten Faktoren für die Beeinträchtigung der Lebensqualität heraus. 65 % Prozent aller Patienten gaben an, sich ihrer Hautveränderungen zu schämen. Auch bei anderen tropischen Hauterkrankungen stellt Schamgefühl einen wichtigen Beeinträchtigungsfaktor dar [42-45]. In unserer Studie versuchten viele Patienten ihre Läsionen zu verstecken, indem sie bspw. Bandagen und zusätzliche Kleidungsstücke anlegten. Dies entspricht in Nordbrasiliens nicht den üblichen Bekleidungsgewohnheiten und induziert im sozialen Umfeld Fragen, die wiederum zu Stigmatisierung und reduziertem Selbstwertgefühl führen können.

KAP Studie

HrCLM ist in den Tropen sehr häufig [7]. Trotzdem wird die Erkrankung sowohl in der Wissenschaft als auch im öffentlichen Gesundheitswesen selten berücksichtigt [52]. In gängigen Lehrbüchern und gesundheitspolitischen Debatten wird die Erkrankung entweder lediglich als Belästigung beschrieben oder gar nicht berücksichtigt [16, 53, 54]. Man geht davon aus, dass Betroffene ebenfalls die Infestation mit ektoparasitären Erkrankungen wenig berücksichtigen und diese nicht behandeln [55].

Im Rahmen der KAP-Studie stellten wir fest, dass die Mütter HrCLM-assoziierte Symptome ihrer Kinder als schwerwiegend wahrnahmen und deren durch Juckreiz verursachten

Schlafstörungen als sehr beeinträchtigend für sie empfanden. Gleichwohl brachten die Mütter ihre Kinder nur im Falle von ausgedehnten Läsionen und bakterieller Superinfektion in die nächstgelegene Gesundheitsstation. Stattdessen wurden vielfältige Hausmittel und gängige Antiseptika zur Therapie der HrCLM angewandt. Ähnliche Hausmittel werden auch bei anderen ektoparasitären Erkrankungen verwendet [56, 57]. Einige therapeutische Maßnahmen bergen zusätzliche gesundheitliche Risiken: So wurden Blasen und Pusteln mit unsterilen Werkzeugen manipuliert, was zu Sepsis oder Tetanusinfektionen führen kann. Die Anwendung von Tabak oder Insektiziden kann zu Intoxikationen führen [58-61]. Die fehlende Effektivität der Therapieversuche war den Müttern dennoch bewusst.

Des Weiteren war den Müttern die Ursachen für eine Infestation, also der Kontakt mit feuchten Böden und Tierexkrementen bekannt. Es wurden jedoch auch andere Übertragungswege – bspw. Kontakt mit Müll, Tierurin und verschmutztem Wasser – sowie enger Körperkontakt als Transmissionsweg vermutet. In einer KAP-Studie zur Tungiasis im Nordosten Brasiliens benannten die Teilnehmerinnen ähnliche Übertragungswege [57]. Dies lässt vermuten, dass die Mütter nicht per se Pathogenese und Risikofaktoren der Erkrankungen kennen, sondern eher allgemeine, für diverse parasitäre Hauterkrankungen prädisponierende, Armutssindikatoren benennen können [54].

Trotz bestehendem Leidensdruck und uneffektiver häuslicher Therapie nahmen die Mütter der Betroffenen nur bei ausgeprägter Manifestation professionelle Hilfe in Anspruch. Dies ist durch verschiedene Faktoren begründet. Erstens empfanden die Mütter die Inanspruchnahme professioneller Therapie als starke finanzielle Belastung. Zwar ist die Untersuchung in einer Gesundheitsstation kostenlos, geeignete Medikamente sind jedoch nicht immer vorhanden und müssen häufig in einer Apotheke gekauft werden. Außerdem fallen bei räumlicher Entfernung der Gesundheitszentren Fahrtkosten an. Zweitens führt HrCLM primär bei Kindern und Jugendlichen neben der physischen auch zu psychischer Beeinträchtigung. Bei Kindern kommt es aus Angst vor Ansteckung und aufgrund von Hänseln bei sichtbaren Hautläsionen zu Ausgrenzung, dies kann zu Scham führen. Die Mütter fühlten sich aufgrund des Verdachts der Vernachlässigung ihrer Kinder durch andere Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft stigmatisiert. Dies erklärt unter anderem, weshalb HrCLM zunächst innerhalb der eigenen vier Wände behandelt wird. Drittens besteht bei den Müttern, vor allem bei häufiger Reinfestation, ein realistisches Verständnis von Symptomen und Komplikationen der HrCLM. Im Gegensatz zu den Überzeugungen einer Population im Nordosten Brasiliens ist die HrCLM nicht mit irrationalen Ängsten oder Mystifizierungen assoziiert. Dies erklärt, weshalb

medizinische Hilfe in einem ähnlichen Umfeld im Nordosten Brasiliens in Anspruch genommen wird [15].

Das Zusammenspiel dieser Faktoren erklärt, weshalb in einem Setting, in dem Armut eine tägliche Herausforderung darstellt, die Therapie der HrCLM trotz starker Beeinträchtigung keine Priorität ist.

Zusammenfassung

In Armensiedlungen von Manaus ist die HrCLM mit ausgeprägter Morbidität und deutlicher Einschränkung der hautbezogenen Lebensqualität verbunden. Die Symptome und Komplikationen der HrCLM können von den Betroffenen realistisch eingeschätzt werden, die prädisponierenden Faktoren werden benannt, können aber – da armutsbedingt – nicht in effektive Prävention umgesetzt werden. Professionelle Hilfe wird aufgrund von Stigmatisierung und Armut nur selten in Anspruch genommen. Die einmalige Therapie mit Ivermectin erwies sich in unserer Studie, auch bei ausgeprägter Morbidität, als effektiv und einfach anwendbar. Daher empfehlen wir die Therapie mit Ivermectin für endemische Regionen als Teil der medizinischen Grundversorgung. Dass Bereitstellen von Ivermectin allein stellt allerdings in Anbetracht armutsbedingter Risikofaktoren, häufiger Reinfestationen, Stigmatisierung und der seltenen Inanspruchnahme professioneller Hilfe keine ausreichende Maßnahme zur Verbesserung der Morbidität und Lebensqualität dar. Effektivität und Durchführbarkeit von Gesundheitserziehungsprogrammen und Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung der prekären Lebensbedingungen zur Bekämpfung von HrCLM sollten daher in zukünftigen Studien evaluiert werden.

Abkürzungsverzeichnis

HrCLM: hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans

mDLQI: *modifizierter dermatology life quality index*

FGD: Fokusgruppendiskussion

KAP: Knowledge, Attitude and Practice

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Eidesstattliche Versicherung

„Ich, Angela Schuster, versichere an Eides statt durch meine eigenhändige Unterschrift, dass ich die vorgelegte Dissertation mit dem Thema: „Morbidität, Lebensqualitätsbeeinträchtigung und Therapie der Hakenwurm-assoziierten kutanen Larva migrans in verarmten Gemeinden in Manaus, Brasilien“ selbstständig und ohne nicht offengelegte Hilfe Dritter verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel genutzt habe.

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Die Bedeutung dieser eidesstattlichen Versicherung und die strafrechtlichen Folgen einer unwahren eidesstattlichen Versicherung (§156,161 des Strafgesetzbuches) sind mir bekannt und bewusst.“

Anteilserklärung an den erfolgten Publikationen

Angela Schuster hatte folgenden Anteil an den folgenden Publikationen:

Publikation 1: Schuster A, Lesshafft H, Talhari S, Guedes de Oliveira S, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H., [Life quality impairment caused by hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans in resource-poor communities in Manaus, Brazil.](#) PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases. 2011

Beitrag im Einzelnen: Datenerhebung, Evaluation der Daten, Artikel Erstellung (65%)

Publikation 2: Lesshafft H, Schuster A, Reichert F, Talhari S, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H., [Knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding cutaneous larva migrans in deprived communities in Manaus, Brazil.](#) The Journal of Infection in Developing Countries. 2012

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Publikation 3: Schuster A, Lesshafft H, Reichert F, Talhari S, de Oliveira SG, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H., [Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans in northern Brazil: resolution of clinical pathology after a single dose of ivermectin.](#) Clinical Infectious Diseases. 2011

Beitrag im Einzelnen: Datenerhebung, Evaluation der Daten, Artikel Erstellung (65%)

Lebenslauf

Mein Lebenslauf wird aus datenschutzrechtlichen Gründen in der elektronischen Version meiner Arbeit nicht veröffentlicht.

Publikationsliste

Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans in patients living in an endemic community in Brazil: immunological patterns before and after ivermectin treatment. Shimogawara R, Hata N, Schuster A, Lesshafft H, Guedes de Oliveira S, Ignatius R, Akao N, Ohta N, Feldmeier H., Eur J Microbiol Immunol (Bp). 2013 Dec;3(4):258-66.

Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans in northern Brazil: resolution of clinical pathology after a single dose of ivermectin. Schuster A, Lesshafft H, Reichert F, Talhari S, de Oliveira SG, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H. Clin Infect Dis. 2013 Oct;57(8):1155-7.

Mini review: Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans. Feldmeier H, Schuster A. Eur J Clin Microbiol Infect Dis. 2012 Jun;31(6):915-8.

Knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding cutaneous larva migrans in deprived communities in Manaus, Brazil. Lesshafft H, Schuster A, Reichert F, Talhari S, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H. J Infect Dev Ctries. 2012 May 14;6(5):422-9.

Life quality impairment caused by hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans in resource-poor communities in Manaus, Brazil. Schuster A, Lesshafft H, Talhari S, Guedes de Oliveira S, Ignatius R, Feldmeier H., PLoS Negl Trop Dis. 2011 Nov;5(11):e1355.

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Life Quality Impairment Caused by Hookworm-Related Cutaneous Larva Migrans in Resource-Poor Communities in Manaus, Brazil

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Abstract

Background: Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans (CLM) is a common but neglected tropical skin disease caused by the migration of animal hookworm larvae in the epidermis. The disease causes intense pruritus and is associated with important morbidity. The extent to which CLM impairs skin disease-associated life quality has never been studied.

Methods: A modified version of the Dermatology Life Quality Index (mDLQI) was used to determine skin disease-associated life quality in 91 adult and child patients with CLM, living in resource-poor communities in Manaus, Brazil. Symptoms and signs were documented and skin disease-associated life quality was semi-quantitatively assessed using mDLQI scores. The assessment was repeated two and four weeks after treatment with ivermectin.

Results: Ninety-one point five percent of the study participants showed a considerable reduction of skin disease-associated life quality at the time of diagnosis. The degree of impairment correlated with the intensity of infection ($\rho = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$), the number of body areas affected ($\rho = 0.30$; $p = 0.004$), and the presence of lesions on visible areas of the skin ($p = 0.002$). Intense pruritus, sleep disturbance (due to itching) and the feeling of shame were the most frequent skin disease-associated life quality restrictions (reported by 93.4%, 73.6%, and 64.8% of the patients, respectively). No differences were observed in skin disease-associated life quality restriction between boys and girls or men and women. Two weeks after treatment with ivermectin, skin disease-associated life quality improved significantly. After four weeks, 73.3% of the patients considered their disease-associated life quality to have returned to normal.

Conclusions: CLM significantly impaired the skin disease-associated life quality in child and adult patients living in urban slums in North Brazil. After treatment with ivermectin, life quality normalised rapidly.

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Introduction

Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans (CLM) is a parasitic skin disease caused by the migration of animal hookworm larvae such as *Ancylostoma braziliense*, *A. caninum* or *Uncinaria stenocephala* in the epidermis. The infection occurs when third-stage larvae come into contact with human skin and penetrate into the epidermis. Since animal hookworm larvae cannot penetrate the basal membrane of the human host, they remain confined to the epidermis where they migrate for several weeks or months, and eventually die in situ [1]. CLM is frequent in impoverished rural and urban communities in countries with hot climates [2], [3], [4], [5], [6]. In these settings the prevalence of CLM can reach 4% in the general population and 15% in children <4 years. [6], [7], [8].

CLM belongs to the category of neglected tropical diseases [9], [10].

The main symptom of CLM is severe pruritus, which intensifies at night. The itching leads to sleep disturbance and day somnolence [6]. Scratching may cause extensive excoriations and subsequent bacterial superinfection of the lesions, typically by *Streptococcus pyogenes* or *Staphylococcus aureus*. Bacterial superinfection by group-A streptococci may induce the development of post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis [11].

A recent study on knowledge, attitudes and practice among mothers of children with CLM highlighted the psychosocial stress associated with this parasitic skin disease and its negative impact on family life (H.Lesshafft 2010, unpublished data). This prompted us to investigate the impairment of skin disease-

Author Summary

Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans (CLM) is a parasitic skin disease common in developing countries with hot climates. In resource-poor settings, CLM is associated with considerable morbidity. The disease is caused by animal hookworm larvae that penetrate the skin and migrate aimlessly in the epidermis as they cannot penetrate the basal membrane. Particularly in the rainy season, the intensity of infection is high with up to 40 larval tracks in an affected individual. Tracks are very itchy and are surrounded by a significant inflammation of the skin. Bacterial superinfection is common and intensifies the inflammation. The psychosocial consequences caused by CLM have never been investigated. We showed that CLM causes skin disease-associated life quality impairment in 91 patients with CLM. Skin disease-associated life quality was significantly impaired. The degree of impairment correlated to the intensity of infection and the number of body areas affected. After treatment with ivermectin, life quality was rapidly restored.

associated life quality in patients with CLM in a semi-quantitative manner.

Materials and Methods

Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in Manaus, the capital of Amazonas State, North Brazil, from October 2008 to February 2009. Patients were actively recruited in resource-poor neighbourhoods, so called *invadões*. Patients were identified via word-of-mouth advertising through primary health care centres, neighbourhood organisations and community leaders. Twenty-three patients were recruited in *Barrio da União* and 28 in *Nova Vitória*; 40 patients came from five further resource-poor communities scattered in the city of Manaus. All communities were situated along small tributaries of the Amazon River (*igarapés*).

In these communities, most houses are built on stilts (*palafitas*) and made of wooden planks or recycled materials. Streets are unpaved, access to drinking water is precarious, sanitation is deficient and garbage is usually disposed in the adjacent *igarapé* or on the street. Dogs and cats stray around and feed on garbage found below and around the houses. In the rainy season, the communities are regularly inundated and animal faeces are widely dispersed.

Usually, households include two to six children. Blended family constellations, single mothers, adult illiteracy and unemployment are frequent. Alcoholism, psychological and physical violence and drug abuse are common.

The setting in which the study was carried out shares many social and economical characteristics with numerous other impoverished urban communities in South America. Most households in which the patients lived benefitted from the national *Bolsa Família* and *Bolsa Escola* programs which support families with a monthly per capita income <140 Brazilian Reais (equivalent to 54 Euros at the time of study) with regular financial contributions.

Study Design

The study is part of a larger research project on the epidemiology, morbidity, and control of CLM in North Brazil. Individuals aged ≥ 5 years with a diagnosis of CLM were eligible for the study. The investigation was performed as a prospective study with active case detection. Pregnant women and children

<5 were excluded from the study because ivermectin treatment is contra-indicated in these groups. The study took place between October 2008 and July 2009. The diagnosis of CLM was made clinically. The whole skin was examined in a room where privacy was guaranteed and good lighting was available. The genital area was only inspected when the patient or his/her carer gave verbal consent. Children were always examined in the presence of their mothers. CLM was diagnosed when the characteristic elevated linear or serpiginous track was visible and the lesion had moved forward during the preceding days [6], [12]. The number and the topographic localisation of each lesion was documented. Each track was defined as a single lesion, irrespective of the distance between the tracks. Tungiasis (jigger flea) and scabies, parasitic skin diseases also characterized by itching skin lesions, were excluded by careful clinical examination.

In order to determine the topographic distribution of the lesions and the affected area of the skin, the body surface was divided into right and left. As in previous studies each side was subdivided into 14 areas as follows: head, upper arm, forearm, hand, thorax, abdomen, back, buttock, genital/inguinal area, thigh, lower leg, ankle, back and sole of the foot [13]. Body areas were further classified into clearly visible areas (head, forearm, hand, lower leg, back and sole of the foot), partially visible areas (upper arm, thorax, abdomen, back, thigh) and non-visible areas (buttock, genital/inguinal area) according to local dress codes. Lesions were differentiated into papular, crusted-papular, and nodular [13]. The presence and dimensions of excoriations were documented. A simple lesion was defined as a track without bacterial superinfection, excoriations, or a significant inflammation presenting nodular lesion or an extended erythema. Bacterial bacterial superinfection was diagnosed when pustules, suppuration, or an abscess were present [6].

The severity of CLM was determined semi-quantitatively, using a severity score. This score combines the following variables: number of tracks (1–2 tracks = 1 point, 3–5 tracks = 2 points, 6–10 tracks = 3 points, >10 tracks = 4 points); presence/absence of secondary infection (0/2 points); signs of local inflammation (erythema, warmth or swelling = 1 point, pain = 2 points, nodular lesions = 3 points); presence of lymphadenopathy proximal to the lesion (0/1 point). Hence, the severity score can vary between 1 and 10 points.

Immediately after diagnosis patients were treated with ivermectin (200 µg/kg) in a single oral dose (Revectina; Solvay Farma Ltda, São Paulo, Brazil). Two and four weeks after treatment, the patients were re-examined and the mDLQI was determined again.

Dermatology Life Quality Index

The Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) was developed by Finlay and Khan in 1994 [14]. It is a validated instrument to assess skin-associated life quality impairment and it is the most frequently used tool to determine skin disease-associated life quality in patients with skin diseases of infectious and non-infectious origin [15], [16], [17].

The original DLQI questionnaire is available in English and in several other languages (www.dermatology.org.uk). In the present study, the Brazilian Portuguese translation was used. First, the wording was adapted to local culture and attitudes according to guidelines described by Cestari et al. [18]. Second, the questions were modified to focus on characteristic sequelae of parasitic skin diseases, and their impact on life quality in the setting of resource-poor communities in Brazil. Third, questions not applicable to children, such as the impact of skin disease on sexual life, were omitted in accordance with the original questionnaire for children [19]. This resulted in a modified dermatology life quality index

(mDLQI) with eight items and a score varying between 0 and 24 points. The items were the following: pruritus, sleep disturbance, feeling of shame, need to adapt clothing in order to cover up skin lesions, problems faced at work or in school, impairment of leisure activities, impairment in personal relationships, teasing (only children), and problems concerning sexual relationships (only adults). The mDLQI has been validated by Worth et al. in patients with scabies living in a similar setting in northeast Brazil [20].

Since illiteracy was widespread, each statement was read out loud to the patient by one of the investigators (AS or HL) and its meaning explained in a standardized manner. The answers to each statement were weighted as follows: not at all = 0 points, a little = 1 point, quite a lot = 2 points, very much = 3 points [14]. The points for each statement were added up and formed the mDLQI for each patient. The mDLQI scores were categorised as shown in table 1.

Statistical Analysis

The data were entered twice into a database using Epi Info software package Version 3.4.3 (CDC Atlanta, USA) and checked for errors which may have occurred during data entry. Data analysis was performed using SPSS for Windows (Version 16.0; SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois). Since data did not follow a normal distribution, the median and the interquartile range (IQR) were used as an indicator of central tendency and dispersion of the data, respectively. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient was calculated for correlations between mDLQI scores and other ordinal variables. The Mann-Whitney-U test was used to compare mDLQI scores between subgroups of patients. Relative frequencies were compared using the chi-squared test.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Fundação de Medicina Tropical do Amazonas (FMT-AM), the reference institution for tropical diseases of Amazonas State.

The objectives of the study were explained to each participant in simple and comprehensible Portuguese. The right to withdraw at any time was described in plain words. Patients had time to meditate about their decision and were given the possibility to discuss any doubts with the researchers. Each participant, or in the case of minors, their legal guardian, signed the written informed consent form. In case of illiteracy consent was given via fingerprint. The informed consent form was written and read out loud, and after each paragraph, the participant was asked whether she/he understood its meaning. Patients with other skin diseases than CLM were referred to the nearest primary health care centre or to the outpatient department of the FMT-AM, where treatment was provided free of charge.

Table 1. Categories of the modified Dermatology Life Quality Index.

DLQI points	Effect on patient's life
0–1	None
2–3	Small
4–8	Moderate
9–16	Large
17–24	Very large

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Results

Ninety-one patients were included in the study, 63 of them were male and 28 female. The median age was 10 years (IQR 7–12, range 5–44 years). The demographic and clinical characteristics of the patients are summarized in Table 2. Forty-four point eight percent of the patients had more than two lesions. The maximal number of lesions was 51. 88% of the patients had noted the appearance of the oldest track during the last four weeks. Figure 1 shows a typical example of an inflamed and superinfected track at a visible body part.

Nearly all study participants showed a reduction of life quality (mDLQI ≥ 2 points) at the time of diagnosis (Table 3). The majority of the patients (51.6%) showed a moderate life quality impairment.

At baseline, the median mDLQI score was 5 (IQR 3–8). 6 (IQR 3–9) for adults and 5 (IQR 3–8) for children ($p = 0.7$; Table 4). Pruritus, sleep disturbance, feeling of shame and the need to dress differently were the most frequent restrictions. Significant differences in perceived restrictions between adult and child patients existed for problems faced at work/school and impair-

Table 2. Clinical and demographic characteristics of patients with CLM (n = 91).

Characteristic	N (%)
Sex	
Male	63 (69.2)
Female	28 (30.8)
Age (years)	
Median	10
IQR	5–44
Type of lesions present ^a	
Simple track	87 (94.6)
Crusted papular	57 (62.0)
Papular	6 (6.5)
Nodular	7 (7.6)
Excoriation	45 (48.9)
Bacterial superinfection ^b	12 (13.0)
Number of lesions	
1–2 lesions	48 (52.2)
3–4 lesions	16 (17.4)
5–6 lesions	6 (6.5)
7–8 lesions	8 (8.7)
>10 lesions	14 (15.2)
Topographic area of the lesions ^a	
Uncovered body areas	95 (84.1)
Partly covered body areas	34 (30.1)
Covered body areas	21 (18.6)
Duration of infection ^c	
1–7 days	34 (37.0)
8–28 days	47 (51.0)
>28 days	11 (12.0)

^amultiple classifications possible.

^bpustules, suppuration, abscess.

^cin case of multiple lesions, appearance of the oldest.

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Figure 1. Grossly inflamed and superinfected larval track on the thigh of a 8-year-old boy.
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ment in social relationships ($p = 0.040$ and $p = 0.026$, respectively). There was no difference in mDLQI scores between boys and girls (5 [IQR 3-8] versus 6 [IQR 3-7]; $p = 0.86$) and men and women (6 [IQR 3-9] versus 4 [IQR 2-9]; $p = 0.63$).

The degree of skin disease-associated life quality impairment correlated strongly with the severity of the infection ($\rho = 0.76$; $p < 0.001$) (Figure 2) and the number of affected body areas ($\rho = 0.30$; $p = 0.004$) (Figure 3). A significant correlation existed between the presence of lesions in clearly visible body areas and the mDQLI score ($p = 0.002$). Skin disease-associated life quality impairment did not depend on the number of CLM episodes experienced previously ($p = 0.88$), the duration of the infection

($p = 0.52$), or the presence or absence of bacterial superinfection ($p = 0.80$).

The follow-up examinations showed an improvement of skin disease-associated life quality two weeks after treatment with ivermectin (median mDLQI = 5 [IQR 3-8] versus 1 [IQR 0-3; $p < 0.001$] Table 5). Four weeks after treatment, the median mDLQI score was zero and 82% of the patients reported a normalization of their skin disease-associated life quality. The normalization of skin disease-associated life quality was paralleled by a drastic reduction of the CLM severity score from a median of 4 points (IQR 3-6) to 1 point (IQR 1-1) two weeks after treatment with ivermectin and to 1 point (IQR 0-1) at the end of the study (both $p < 0.001$). Figures 4 and 5 show the resolution of the inflammatory skin reactions around embedded hookworm larvae before and four weeks after treatment with ivermectin.

Table 3. Dermatology life quality impairment in patients with CLM (n = 91).

mDLQI categories	N	%
No effect (0–1 points)	5	5.5
Small effect (2–3 points)	21	23.1
Moderate effect (4–8 points)	47	51.6
Large effect (9–16 points)	18	19.8
Very large effect (17–24 points)	0	0

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Discussion

Diseases of the skin lead to various levels of suffering. First, they cause defined clinical pathology, such as visible inflammation, pruritus or pain. Second, skin diseases are frequently chronic in nature and patients have to take drugs, either topically or orally, for a protracted period of time. Third, if gross alterations of the skin are located on visible body parts, they may, at worst, lead to social withdrawal and/or to exclusion from society, as it is the case, for instance, with leprosy [21]. Additionally, patients may be confronted with ignorance or misconceptions regarding the aetiology of their skin disease, such as the fear that the condition

Table 4. Impairment of life quality in adult and child patients with CLM (n=91).

Area of impairment	All patients (n=91)	Adults (n=11)	Children (n=80)	Children vs. adults p-value
Pruritus	85 (93.4)	11 (100.0)	74 (92.5)	0.357
Sleep disturbance	67 (73.6)	9 (81.8)	58 (72.5)	0.511
Feeling of shame	59 (64.8)	6 (54.5)	53 (66.3)	0.446
Need to dress differently	31 (34.0)	3 (27.3)	28 (35.0)	0.612
Problems faced at work/in school ^a	13 (14.9) ^b	3 (42.9) ^c	10 (12.5)	0.040
Leisure activities	24 (26.4)	5 (45.5)	19 (23.8)	0.126
Personal relationships	13 (14.3)	4 (36.4)	9 (11.3)	0.026
Teasing	-	-	16 (20.0)	-
Sexual relationships	-	0 (0.0)	-	-
mDLQI scores				
Median	5	6	5	p = 0.668
IQR	3–8	3–9	3–8	

^aonly employed patients analyzed.^bn = 87.^cn = 7.

doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001355.t004

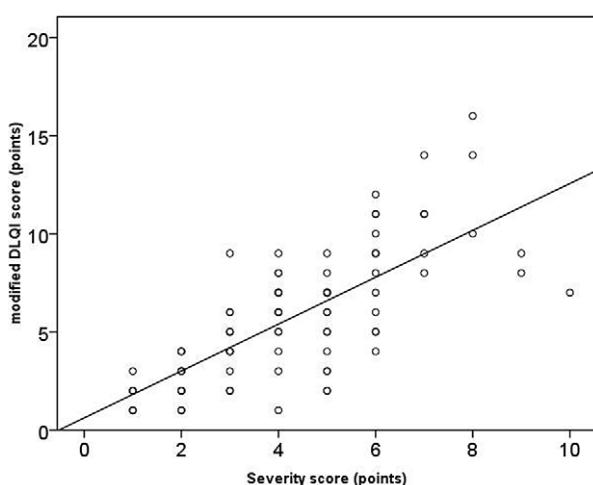
is contagious or related to poor personal hygiene – assumptions which may lead to stigmatisation [22], [23]. Lymphatic filariasis with gross lymphoedema is a paradigmatic example of this category of skin diseases [24], [25], [26].

CLM is an extremely itchy skin condition characterized by signs of inflammation such as erythema. Since lesions are frequently located at visible body parts they are difficult to hide from the public [13] and negative impact on emotional well-being of the patient is possible. In our study 94.5% of patients with CLM reported reduction of their skin disease-associated life quality with a median mDLQI score of 5 (Table 3). The degree of skin disease-associated life quality impairment was positively correlated with the intensity of the infection (Figure 2), the number of body areas affected (Figure 3), and the presence of lesions at clearly visible body parts.

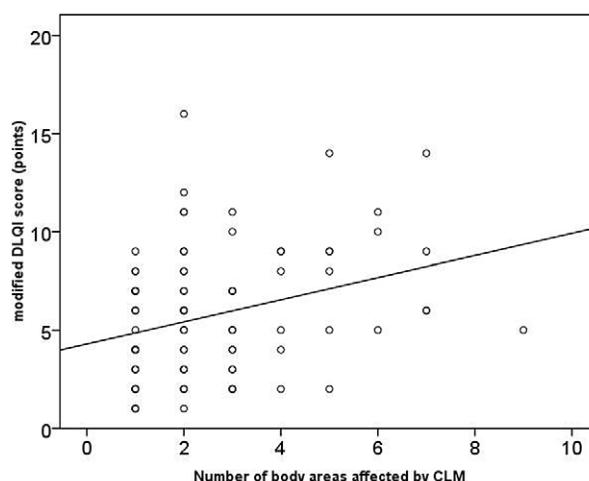
In contrast to a study in patients with scabies [20] we did not find different degrees of impairment between women and men. This could be due to the fact that scabies lesions usually are less

obvious to the patient and external observers/third parties than highly inflamed larval tracks. Besides, in scabies the lesions are frequently located at “hidden” topographic areas, such as the interdigital spaces. Finally, the preponderance of male participants in the study – a consequence of the higher prevalence of CLM in males in the area where the study was conducted – may have blurred the differences between the sexes.

The most common finding associated with an impairment of skin disease-associated life quality was pruritus (93.4% of the patients). Pruritus causes the patient to scratch repeatedly – a behavior which does not pass unnoticed by other members of society [27]. In addition, since the intensity of itching increases at night, it causes alterations in the sleep pattern. The affective aspect of pruritus may induce a vicious cycle in which increasing mental harm and distress lead to increased itching which, in turn, augments scratching [27], [28].

**Figure 2. Correlation between severity of CLM and impairment of skin disease-associated life quality ($\rho=0.76$; $p<0.001$).**

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**Figure 3. Correlation between the number of affected areas and impairment of skin disease-associated life quality ($\rho=0.36$; $p=0.004$).**

doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001355.g003

Table 5. Improvement of life quality after treatment with ivermectin.

Area of impairment	Significant impairment reported ^a			p-value before treatment versus	
	before treatment (n = 91)	2 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks
		after treatment		after treatment	
		(n = 60)	(n = 55)		
Pruritus	85 (93.4)	21 (35.0)	12 (21.8)	<0.001	<0.001
Sleep disturbance	67 (73.6)	12 (20.0)	10 (18.3)	<0.001	<0.001
Feeling of shame	59 (64.8)	19 (31.7)	8 (14.5)	<0.001	<0.001
Need to dress differently	31 (34.0)	11 (18.3)	4 (7.3)	0.018	0.018
Problems faced at work/in school ^b	13 (16.5)	3 (3.4)	2 (2.3)	0.059	0.059
Leisure activities	24 (26.4)	11 (18.0)	11 (20.0)	0.168	0.637
Personal relationships	13 (14.3)	5 (8.3)	3 (5.5)	0.083	0.014
mDLQI scores					
Median	5	1	0	<0.001	<0.001
IQR	3–8	0–3	0–2		

^a≥2 points of the mDLQI.^bonly employed patients analyzed.

doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001355.t005

Insomnia was reported as a cause of life quality impairment by 73.6% of the patients. A previous study has shown that CLM related insomnia manifests itself as a sleep maintenance disorder [13], probably due to an increased perception of pruritus during the night. In patients with pruritus-induced perturbation of sleep, quality and duration of sleep are reduced as a consequence of shorter non-REM sleeping periods [29]. This may cause daytime somnolence, irritability and psychological problems such as anxiety disorders [30], [31].

It seems paradoxical that insomnia has been cited as most important restriction by people living in an *invasão*. From an outside observer's point of view, getting rest and sleep in this setting seems to be very difficult anyway: poor housing and a high population density allow noise to enter the house almost unaltered and loud music is heard even late at night. However, our patients seem to have adapted to the extremely noisy environment of an *invasão* and considered sleep and recreation to be severely impaired by the CLM-related pruritus. In fact, after treatment, insomnia was reduced significantly already after two weeks (Table 3).

The feeling of shame was noted by 64.8% of the patients. In our study on knowledge, attitudes and disease perception, it was found that shame frequently resulted from the concept that the occurrence of CLM reflects poor personal hygiene and lack of care (H. Lesshaftt, unpublished observation).

Another commonly noted restriction is related to the necessity of patients with CLM to dress differently. In the hot climate of northern Brazil a great part of the body remains uncovered. Hence, skin lesions are difficult to hide and the effort to cover them up with extra clothes or bandages may lead to a reduction of self-esteem and provoke shame and stigmatisation [23], [32], [33]. These somato-psychological interactions were confirmed by our finding that mDLQI scores were highest in patients in whom lesions were present at clearly visible parts of the body.

Problems faced at work or at school and impairment of personal relationships were also a frequently noted restriction of skin disease-associated life quality (Table 4). Several mechanisms may underlie these psycho-social consequences. First, and

similarly to other skin diseases such as psoriasis, the erroneous assumption that CLM is contagious leads to alterations in personal relationships and eventually to social exclusion [23]. Second, as shown in a previous focus group discussion in the study area (unpublished data), mothers frequently ban affected children from playing outside, partly to prevent a new infection and partly to avoid teasing by other children, which may cause boredom and or lead to a feeling of social exclusion. Thirdly, bullying and interrupted personal relationships may provoke a feeling of disgust and shame about the skin condition and reinforce an active withdrawal from social networks due to the fear of stigmatisation [23], [22].

With regard to personal relationships, the significantly lower impairment of skin disease-associated life quality in children compared to adults might be explained by the fact that consciousness about their own appearance interferes less in children's relationships. The higher impairment perceived by adults at work is presumably related to a similar mechanism. At work, adults are confronted with the "outside world" in which CLM reflects a life in poverty. In contrast, children - going to school in the community - do not leave their social environment and consequently may perceive less life quality impairment.

Hitherto, only a few studies have attempted to determine skin disease-associated life quality impairment in tropical parasitic skin diseases.

While in patients with active cutaneous leishmaniasis or onchocerciasis, the average impairment was found to be higher than in the CLM patients of our study, skin disease-associated life quality restrictions in lymphatic filariasis caused a similar or higher impairment depending on the severity of lymphoedema [24], [25], [26], [32], [33], [34]. In contrast, patients with scabies living in an *invasão* in Northeast Brazil perceived less impairment than our patients with CLM [20]. In scabies the duration of infection, but not the number of infested body areas, correlated with skin disease-associated life quality impairment. This is probably due to the rather slow development of the clinical pathology in scabies, where the degree of skin alteration increases



Figure 4. Excoriated lesion on the left foot of a 9-year-old boy, before treatment.
doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001355.g004



Figure 5. Excoriated lesion on the left foot of a 9-year-old boy, four weeks after treatment.
doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001355.g005

gradually, whereas in CLM inflammatory skin reactions develop within a couple of days.

We think that our data clearly indicate a cause-effect relationship between cutaneous larva migrans and impaired quality of life. First, the severity of disease was significantly correlated to the degree of impaired quality of life ($\rho = 0.76$; $p < 0.001$) and number of body areas affected ($\rho = 0.30$; $p = 0.004$), indicating positive “dose-response” relationships. Second, already two weeks after the regression of skin lesions due to treatment with ivermectin, the degree of life quality impairment decreased significantly. Taken together, these findings provide substantial evidence that the impairment of life quality is the consequence of the parasitic skin disease as it has been observed in patients suffering from other parasitic infections [24–26] [32–34]. These findings also suggest that a treatment that costs approximately 40–80 eurocents, not only abrogates clinical pathology, but also averts stressful psycho-social consequences and prevents the development of secondary morbidity when given promptly.

When interpreting our results one has to take into account that skin disease-associated life quality of people living in misery in an urban slum is very low per se [35]. Housing is poor, sanitary infrastructure is deficient, crowding is common and social problems such as unemployment, alcoholism, illiteracy, and violence prevail. Obviously, these characteristics should mitigate perceived restrictions on skin disease-associated life quality in our patients. In fact, the results of another study

in the same setting showed that members of the community considered parasitic skin diseases negligible in comparison to the existential problems of daily life (H. Lesshaftt, unpublished observation).

In conclusion, CLM impairs the physical and mental wellbeing as well as social interaction of patients in a setting where skin disease-associated life quality is generally low. A single dose of ivermectin caused a complete resolution of the lesions within one month and restored skin disease-associated life quality to the normal level.

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Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: AS HL HF. Performed the experiments: AS HL. Analyzed the data: AS. Contributed reagents/materials/analysis tools: AS HL ST SGO. Wrote the paper: AS. Revised the manuscript: HL HF RI ST SGO.

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Original Article

Knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding cutaneous larva migrans in deprived communities in Manaus, Brazil

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Abstract

Introduction: Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans (HrCLM) is a neglected parasitic skin disease commonly found in resource-poor communities in tropical countries. It is acquired via skin contact with faeces of cats and dogs, and causes intense pruritus and significant morbidity.

Methodology: We investigated knowledge, attitudes and practices in caregivers of patients with HrCLM by performing focus group discussions (FGDs) with 20 mothers of children with HrCLM in two endemic urban communities in Manaus, Brazil. Additionally, socio-demographic data of 70 actively detected HrCLM patients in both areas were obtained by using questionnaires.

Results: We found that mainly children who lived in large households and habitually walked barefoot were affected. Family income was low, housing was poor, and food shortage common. In the FGDs, mothers described HrCLM as a severely distressing condition with considerable impact on individual and family life.

Conclusion: Inadequate treatment practices and the identification of poverty-related obstacles for practical prevention of HrCLM by the mothers of affected children indicate that both health education and improvement of living conditions are required jointly.

Key words: cutaneous larva migrans; focus group discussions; KAP study; neglected disease; poverty; Brazil

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Introduction

Hookworm-related cutaneous larva migrans (HrCLM) is a neglected poverty-associated ectoparasitic disease caused by the migration of larvae of animal hookworms, such as *Ancylostoma braziliense*, *Ancylostoma caninum*, or *Uncinaria stenocephala*, in human skin [1,2]. In South America, backyards, streets, public parks and playgrounds are frequently contaminated with faeces of cats and dogs containing hookworm eggs [3-5], especially in resource-poor communities [6,7]. Unfortunately, knowledge about the epidemiology of HrCLM in different countries is poor as most studies focus on manifestations in travellers rather than on the prevalence in endemic communities.

Studies from Brazil show that HrCLM is an important public health problem in resource-poor neighbourhoods, where prevalences of up to 4% in the general population and up to 15% in children were reported [8-10]. However, another study in an endemic area in Brazil showed that HrCLM is neglected by

both the population and physicians [11].

Although by definition a self-limiting disease, HrCLM is an extremely irritating condition: the hookworm larvae migrate in the epidermis for up to several months and cause intense itching. The persistent itching leads to alterations of mood and to sleeplessness [1,10,12]. Additionally, HrCLM skin lesions are frequently superinfected as a result of excoriation due to repetitive scratching [10]. Similar to other parasitic skin diseases, HrCLM is difficult to hide and therefore potentially stigmatizing [13,14].

Studies about knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding HrCLM in an endemic community have never been published, although this information is essential for planning public health interventions. Therefore, our study aims at investigating KAP regarding this ectoparasitosis in an endemic neighbourhood. Furthermore, owed to the association of parasitic skin diseases with poverty, it depicts the social context by providing socio-demographic data of

HrCLM patients from the same community. Thus we aspire to contribute to a further understanding of the health-related effects of poverty.

Methodology

Study design and study area

The study combines qualitative and quantitative methods. In a first step, we used a standardized questionnaire in Portuguese language to collect socio-demographic data and information on previous HrCLM episodes from HrCLM patients. In cases of minors, the questionnaire was answered by or with the help of a caretaker, usually the mother of the patient. In a second step, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were performed with mothers of patients identified by active case detection. The centre of attention lies in the qualitative FGDs, while the quantitative data serve as a supplement to describe the sociodemographic background of the patients and to provide some information about previous HrCLM infestations.

The investigation took place in Bairro da União (Area 1) and Nova Vitória (Area 2), two impoverished neighbourhoods in Manaus, a city of 1.7 million inhabitants. Both study areas were inhabited by approximately 1,000 persons. There was no public sewage system, garbage was dispersed on the footpaths and around the houses, and hygienic conditions were precarious. Innumerable dogs and cats strayed in both areas, that regularly became inundated with heavy rain. Area 1 was situated alongside an *igarapé* (small affluent of the Amazonas River) and the inhabitants had access to basic medical care in a small health station (*casinha de saúde*) nearby, whereas this was not the case for Area 2.

As part of a larger study on the epidemiology and control of HrCLM in Manaus, 70 patients were identified in the two localities (37 in Area 1, and 33 in Area 2) during a period of eight months (November 2008 to January 2009 in Area 1; February to May 2009 in Area 2). Active case detection in both neighbourhoods was performed with the help of local community leaders and paramedical health workers (*agentes comunitários de saúde*). Patients were examined at their homes in a room where privacy was guaranteed. Following the method of Heukelbach and Feldmeier [1], HrCLM was diagnosed when a characteristic elevated linear or serpiginous lesion was present. After diagnosis, patients were treated according to national guidelines with a single dose of oral ivermectin or, when under five years of age or pregnant, with topical thiabendazole.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee

of the Foundation of Tropical Medicine of Amazonas (FMTAM) in Manaus, Brazil. Before physical examination and collection of data, the study aims and methods were explained, and all study participants or, in cases of minors their legal caretakers, gave informed written consent. All were literate. It was made clear that they were free to refuse participation at any point of the study.

Focus group discussions

Based on the facts that in Brazil HrCLM predominantly affects children [9] and that in the study area usually the mothers were in charge of child care, we performed the FGDs with mothers of children with HrCLM. Inclusion criteria were residency in Area 1 or Area 2, and having at least one child diagnosed with HrCLM in the previous four months.

The mothers of all 70 patients included in the questionnaire survey were invited to participate in the FGDs. The invitation was made in written form by the physician who had diagnosed and treated the child. Health workers from the local health facility were not involved in the recruitment of FGD participants in order to prevent pressure on the mothers. The two FGDs were performed in public meeting rooms located within the boundaries of the community. At the beginning, the study aims and procedures were explained to the participants. The moderator (HL) had experience with FGDs in similar settings. The commonly used local name for HrCLM was “*mijacão*”, meaning “dog pee” or “devil pee”.

During the sessions, the moderator posed simple, open-ended questions:

- *What are your experiences with “mija-cão”?*
- *What do you know about “mija-cão”?*
- *What do you do when your child has “mija-cão”?*

When the discussions became repetitive or less motivated, more precise questions were asked following a rough topic guide in the sense of “question flow from general to specific” [15]. During the FGDs, a second researcher (AS) noted observations of group dynamics. The discussions lasted 90 minutes (Area 1) and 65 minutes (Area 2). They were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

For data analysis of the FGDs, we used the method of qualitative content analysis as described by Mayring [16]. Repetitive statements and empty

phrases were excluded (reduction), diffuse, ambiguous or contradictory parts of the text were clarified (explication), and statements were organized in textual categories (structuring). The structuring was performed independently by two investigators (HL and AS) since this strengthens the validity [17], and the two categorization schemes were then united to a single system. Finally, the statements of each category were summarized, and example quotations were chosen and translated into English.

Statistical analysis of data from the questionnaire survey was performed by using SPSS for Windows, vs. 15.0 (IBM, SPSS, Chicago, USA). The SPSS database was checked twice for entry-related errors. To compare the characteristics of the two communities we used the Mann-Whitney U-Test for ordinal variables and Fisher's Test for categorical variables.

Results

Quantitative description

Socio-demographic data and information on the infectious status of the 70 HrCLM patients participating in the questionnaire survey are summarized in Table 1. The patients' average family income of 542 Brazilian Reais per month corresponded to 165 Euros (exchange rate from 31/12/2008) and was just above 480 Reais, the official minimum wage in Brazil for a full-time job at that time. This amount of money was used for an average household size of five. About one third of the respondents testified that they did not always have enough to eat.

Because Area 2 was an illegal settlement (*invasão*) where no health post (*cabinha de saúde*) was implemented, 91% of the respondents in this community had never been visited by a health agent. Most interviewees had suffered from HrCLM before; among those over four years of age, previous episodes of the ectoparasitosis were reported in 38 out of 53 cases (71.7%). In 25% of the patients, treatment of the previous HrCLM manifestations had been recommended by health personnel or in a pharmacy, but none of the professional advisors had suggested an adequate anthelmintic drug.

In Area 2 the HrCLM patients were significantly younger ($p < 0.001$), the floor of the houses was more often made out of concrete or tiles ($p < 0.001$), the households had less contact with health agents ($p < 0.001$), and household income was marginally significantly lower ($p = 0.05$) than in Area 1 (see Table 1; p-values not shown). However, despite these

differences most variables were similar in the patients from the two communities.

Focus group discussions

Twenty mothers participated in the FGDs: ten from Area 1 (labeled M 1-10) and ten from Area 2 (M 11-20). The participants' age and number of children were similar in both groups: median age = 29 years (interquartile range [IQR] = 28-31.5; range 25-39) and median number of children = 3 (IQR = 2-3; range 2-4) in Area 1 versus median age of 29.5 years (IQR = 20-37.5; range 19-51) and median number of children = 3 (IQR = 2-4; range 1-6) in Area 2.

In general, HrCLM was perceived as a debilitating condition, and not as a mere nuisance. The participants were eager to learn more about the disease and appropriate treatment. The mothers of both communities made very similar statements.

Causes

The infectious agent was described as "*um micrório que anda na pele das crianças*" ("a microbe walking in the childrens' skin"). Several times the mothers referred to HrCLM as "*micose*", literally "*mycosis*", in the sense of "itchy skin disease".

Soil contaminated with cat or dog urine and faeces was seen as the main source of HrCLM, but rats and polluted water were also mentioned as causes. The participants in Area 1 expressed their disgust about the dirty, waste-carrying water from the *igarapé* that regularly flooded the community during the rainy season and dispersed sewage on the footpaths and near the houses.

[...] when you turn into our street, it seems like entering the sewers.

- (M 6, 29 years, four children)

In both communities, children were believed to become infested when walking barefoot in the muddy streets, playing football, and throwing sand at each other. Some mothers considered HrCLM to be transmitted by physical contact or shared clothes.

[...] When we scratch them, it stays underneath the fingernails, and then it will be passed to another body region, it is very dangerous.

- (M 1, 32 years, three children)

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of 70 HrCLM-affected individuals and information about previous infestations

		Area 1	Area 2	Total
Number of patients		37	33	70
Sex	male	26 (70.3%)	20 (60.6%)	46 (65.7%)
	female	11 (29.7%)	13 (39.4%)	24 (34.3%)
Age (in years)	< 5	2 (5.4%)	12 (36.4%)	14 (20.0%)
	5-9	18 (48.6%)	14 (42.4%)	32 (45.7%)
	10-14	14 (37.8%)	4 (12.1%)	18 (25.7%)
	> 14	3 (8.1%)	3 (9.0%)	6 (8.6%)
	Median (Range)	9 (2-32)	5 (1-39)	8 (1-39)
Persons per household	less than 5	9 (24.3%)	11 (33.3%)	20 (28.6%)
	5-8	28 (75.7%)	19 (57.6%)	47 (67.1%)
	9 or more	0	3 (0.9%)	3 (4.3%)
	Median (Range)	6 (3-8)	5 (3-17)	5 (3-17)
Household income per month (R\$)	< 480	10 (28.6%)	14 (46.7%)	24 (34.3%)
	480	10 (28.6%)	6 (20.0%)	16 (22.9%)
	> 480	15 (42.9%)	10 (33.3%)	25 (35.7%)
	Medium (Range)	630 (150-1200)	439 (0-960)	542 (0-1200)
	no information	2	3	5
House constructed of	Wood	26 (70.3%)	24 (72.7%)	50 (71.4%)
	Bricks	11 (29.7%)	8 (24.2%)	19 (27.1%)
	Recycled material	0	1 (3.0%)	1 (1.4%)
Floor made of	Concrete/Tiles	13 (35.1%)	26 (78.8%)	39 (55.7%)
	Wood	18 (48.6%)	2 (6.1%)	20 (28.6%)
	Sand/Earth	6 (16.2%)	5 (15.2%)	11 (15.7%)
Street	unpaved	32 (86.5%)	28 (84.4%)	60 (85.7%)
	paved	5 (13.5%)	5 (15.2%)	10 (14.3%)
Household is visited by health agent	Never	13 (35.1%)	30 (90.9%)	43 (61.4%)
	Rarely	19 (51.4%)	2 (6.1%)	21 (30%)
	Frequently	5 (13.5%)	1 (3.0%)	6 (8.6%)
Patient has always enough to eat	Yes	23 (67.6%)	20 (66.6%)	43 (67.2%)
	No	11 (32.4%)	10 (33.3%)	21 (32.8%)
	No information	3	3	6
Patient experienced HrCLM previously	Yes	22 (62.9%)	20 (60.6%)	42 (62.7%)
	No	13 (37.1%)	12 (37.5%)	25 (37.3%)
	No information	2	1	3
Previous treatment attempts using/ based on	None	14 (37.8%)	7 (22.6%)	21 (30.9%)
	Leftover drugs	13 (35.1%)	8 (25.8%)	21 (30.9%)
	Professional advice*	8 (21.6%)	9 (29.0%)	17 (25.0%)
	Homemade product	2 (5.4%)	7 (22.6%)	9 (13.2%)
	No information	0	2	2

*from health post or pharmacy

Symptoms

Severe itching was described as the main symptom of HrCLM, making the children suffer and their mothers feel helpless.

My children can't bear the itching, it drives them crazy!

- (M 13, 51 years, six children)

I really don't know what to do any more.

- (M 14, 33 years, three children)

The participants noted that the itching caused sleep disturbances in their children.

Mine only scratches himself at night, during the day it's no problem, but at night the boy doesn't sleep and doesn't let me sleep either.

- (M 12, 25 years, four children)

Lesions were portrayed as little *caminhos* ("trails") that kept growing and were especially itchy in the head region of the track. Mothers underlined that scratching caused wounds, sometimes deep and bleeding. Some mothers reported the development of blisters. Secondary bacterial infections of the lesions, leading to pustules, purulent discharge, pain and fever, were also described. After healing, the women deplored post-inflammatory depigmentation as "white, ugly marks".

Hands, feet, legs, and back were named as the main topographic localizations of HrCLM, but buttocks, genitals, abdomen, and the head were also mentioned. Simultaneous infestations on multiple sites were common.

It was so ugly! On the legs, on the back and belly, on his buttocks, pure flesh from all this scratching, horrible!

- (M 2, 28 years, two children)

Frequency

Some mothers reported that their children repeatedly suffered from CLM.

My son has already lost count, he caught it so many times.

- (M 17, 50 years, 4 children)

[...] Mine hardly ever have none.

- (M 1, 32 years, 3 children)

It was claimed that after treatment and wound healing, some children became reinfested as soon as they went back to play outside.

He is fine now, but every two or three months it comes back again. When he has contact with sand, when he walks barefoot, it comes back.

- (M 13, 51 years, six children)

The occurrence of HrCLM was considered to be highest in the rainy season.

Treatment

A wide range of household remedies and drugs was brought up in the discussion about HrCLM treatment. Most participants had experimented with various creams and ointments. Topical antimycotics ("vaginal cream") were frequently applied on the lesions and natural remedies such as warm vinegar, warm or hot water/ salt water, slices of fried lemon, raw onion, or urine mixed with tobacco were mentioned.

I was taught to collect his pee and boil it with tobacco [...], then to wash the wound well and rub it dry and then to put it on. He cried and cried, but it helped.

- (M 17, 50 years, four children)

In Area 1 the mothers discussed an ointment containing pork fat and sulphur, which was considered to be effective but unpleasantly smelling. Other options mentioned were acetone, talcum, bicarbonate, permanganate, perfume and common antiseptic substances like iodine, alcohol and antibacterial soap. Furthermore, insecticides, namely Lepecid® (Chlorpyrifos) and Baygon® (Propoxur), were sprayed on HrCLM lesions. These were regarded as being effective but unsafe for use in humans.

This spray that is used for cattle and pigs, Lepecid, my mother sprayed it on him.

- (M 2, 28 years, three children)

You used Lepecid? Look, that's dangerous.

- (M 1, 32 years, three children)

The application of hot candle wax or ice cubes was also considered as beneficial. Blisters were usually opened with needles or knives, although one mother argued that this may cause skin infections.

We do all these stupid things, with the intention of doing good. I opened all the blisters and didn't wash the wound as I should have done, and thus it turned into an infection.

- (M 1, 32 years, three children)

In the case of a severe bacterial superinfection, the child had been taken to the health station.

Expenses for medicine were considered an important financial burden for the household.

I had great difficulties to pay [the drugs], to bring him to the doctor, I spent a lot of money.

- (M 11, 20 years, two children)

Consequences

HrCLM infestation was stated to seriously disturb the children's everyday life. Itching was made responsible for restlessness and concentration problems at home and in school. Sleep disorders affected the whole family and led to conflicts and domestic violence.

For me it was difficult because at night he cried a lot, he didn't let me sleep. And for him to sleep I had to slap him a few times.

- (M 15, 27 years, two children)

To prevent re-infestation, many mothers prohibited their children to play football, to walk barefoot or even to leave the house at all.

My son always plays in the sand. It's a fight with him -- if I let him go outside, the next minute he already is there in that sand. Sometimes I tell him I will chain him up!

- (M 18, 29 years, three children)

The child's self-esteem goes down, because it feels rejected [...]

- (M 17, 50 years, four children)

To hide their skin disease, affected children changed their clothing behaviour.

[My son] is ashamed; he only goes to school with long trousers, because the children are messing around with him.

- (M 4, 39 years, two children)

Some mothers felt stigmatized themselves since others might regard HrCLM as being a sign of maternal

neglect. One mother who looked after children of another woman said:

[...] and when I went to the home of the [other] mother, she even criticized: you are very careless with the boy, all these wounds, man! I got so angry.

(M1, 32 years, 3 children)

Another one added:

I don't listen to that talk. [...] Many people criticize: 'What are you doing with your child? It's all ugly, look at your child's body!'."

- (M 8, 31 years, 3 children)

Discussion

The questionnaire data and the mothers' comments on frequent episodes of HrCLM in the past indicate that this parasitic skin disease is common in the study areas. The fact that patients were mainly children and the mothers' observation of higher prevalence during the rainy season are in accordance with other studies from Brazil [10,12]. Apart from being frequent, HrCLM was considered a severely distressing condition that affects individual and family life.

The symptoms of HrCLM described by the mothers of affected children precisely reflect the scientific description of the disease [10,12]. In addition, the emphasized nocturnal aggravation of pruritus is well-known [1]. Nocturnal itch leads to poor sleeping quality due to shortened deep non-REM phases [18].

Moreover, the strong social impact of HrCLM is displayed in the mothers' concern about stigmatization, school absenteeism, and family conflicts. Correspondingly, we showed in a related study that HrCLM significantly impairs life quality [19]. Stigmatization of patients with skin diseases is known from other ectoparasitoses [13,14,20] and represents a rarely appreciated source of mental harm and distress [21]. Social exclusion of patients might also result from the wrong concept of a person-to-person transmission of HrCLM.

The great variety of treatment practices discussed indicates that none of these was considered satisfactory. Non-specific and potentially hazardous treatment approaches are known from other poverty-related parasitic diseases associated with important morbidity [11,22,23]. The finding that HrCLM was usually treated without professional advice is in

accordance with our previous study in Fortaleza, Brazil, showing that patients with ectoparasitic diseases rarely seek medical assistance [11].

The application of toxic substances such as tobacco and insecticides is a matter of concern since this may result in intoxication [24,25]. Opening blisters and pustules with non-sterile instruments bears the risk of septicemia and tetanus.

In the FGDs, the mothers correctly identified soil contaminated with animal faeces as the source of infestation. They also showed good knowledge about environmental factors such as humid soil, animal excrements, and garbage scattered on the ground. However, rats and animal urine were falsely considered to be responsible for HrCLM. This is not surprising, as animal urine is deposited at the same places as faeces, and rats are an indicator for ample presence of organic waste [26]. In fact, organic garbage attracts dogs and cats and was shown to be a risk factor for geohelminth infections [27]. Interestingly, in our previous KAP study on tungiasis (jigger flea disease), a zoonosis with an animal reservoir similar to that of HrCLM in Brazil, the same environmental factors, namely presence of cat and dog faeces, soil littered with garbage, and rats were described as causes of disease [23]. For both parasitic diseases the local population correctly identified characteristics of poverty as important determinants [28,29]. The observation that HrCLM rarely occurs in more affluent districts of Manaus (S. Talhari, unpublished observation) and the very low income of the households of our patients (average monthly household income in the study participants population = 542 Rs; average in Amazonas State 1914 Rs) corroborate the assumption that HrCLM is a poverty-related disease in urban Brazil. In addition, poverty is reflected by the fact that about one third of the patients had experienced food shortage.

In a setting of deprivation, risk factors of HrCLM such as walking barefoot, dirty streets and helminth-infested stray cats and dogs are difficult to combat as they are symptoms of poverty themselves. Therefore, it is not surprising that the interviewed mothers could not translate their knowledge of the main causes and risk factors of HrCLM into effective prevention.

While health education about HrCLM seems suitable to reduce stigmatization and to promote adequate treatment, prevention measures such as providing shoes for all family members, regular deworming of cats and dogs [30], and keeping streets and public spaces clean will hardly be achievable without improvement of social circumstances and

adequate sanitary services.

In conclusion, our study suggests that health education of communities at risk needs to be combined with the improvement of living conditions to allow disease control. The results of our focus group discussions provide a vivid picture of how an affected community perceives and copes with HrCLM and thereby point out the relation of disease and poverty. As a qualitative study such as the present one may not provide representative data, our findings should encourage further quantitative studies on this subject.

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