Evaluating the prior knowledge of toxoplasmosis among students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

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Brief Communication

Toxoplasmosis is an important infectious disease caused by Toxoplasma gondii, an obligatory intracellular protozoan parasite. Oocysts which are shedding by recently infected cats, as definitive hosts, are infective for intermediate hosts (all warm-blooded animals and humans) after taking short sporulation period in the environment (1,2). The other routs of transmission are congenital transmission and recently recrudescence on internal infections reported in sheep (3-8). Tachyzoites and bradyzoites are two forms of the parasite that were seen in the intermediate and definitive hosts that replicate fast and form tissue cysts, respectively. Carnivores and humans can also be infected by eating raw meats containing tissue cysts (3). Fetal loss and abortion is the most important problem that occurs in humans and some animals such as sheep and pigs (9, 10). Thus, the presence of cats at farms and houses increases the risk of infection for farm animals and pregnant women, respectively. Farm animals are also important as a source of food for humans and their infection increases the zoonotic risk of this disease (8). One of the most useful preventive measures for toxoplasmosis is improving the knowledge of the public about this disease, particularly in more important social groups such as farmers, women, university students and teachers who can help to decrease the risk factors of this disease. The aim of this study was to understand the level of knowledge of toxoplasmosis among university students because they come from different places and have different cultural and scientific backgrounds.

This study was conducted in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, which is one of the oldest universities in Iran. Currently, more than 19000 students are studying at this university. Five hundred and forty nine questionnaires were distributed among the students. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: section 1 which included questions about sex, education, permanent residence and whether the students had any pets; section 2 contained the following question: “Have you heard about toxoplasmosis disease?”. Then, those students who answered “Yes” to this question were asked...