

# Letter to the Editor

Sir,

We refer to our paper entitled *Epidemiological study in a new focus of cutaneous leishmaniasis in the Islamic Republic of Iran* published in the *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 2003, Vol. 9 No. 4, pages 816–826.

In this paper we reported that in Jovein district, Sabzevar county in the north-east of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 of 45 (15.6%) *R. opimus* were found to be infected with *Leishmania* and these isolates were identified as *L. major*. These were identified by Professor K.P. Chang (University of Health Science/Chicago Medical School, United States of America) using a restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP)–PCR technique with *NAGT* gene.

However, subsequent to publication of the above-mentioned paper, characterization was made of one further isolate from

an eighth case of *Rhombomys opimus* found to be infected with *Leishmania* in the same area. This isolate was identified as *L. turanica*.

Thus of a total of 8 of 45 (17.8%) *R. opimus* found to be infected with *Leishmania*, 7 were infected with *L. major* and 1 with *L. turanica*.

It has, until recently, been assumed that *Leishmania* parasites circulating in the *R. opimus* population in the Islamic Republic of Iran are *L. major*. This finding is the first report of the isolation and characterization of *L. turanica* from *R. opimus* from an area where there are many active colonies of the great gerbils. It is most probable that this is a continuation of the distribution of *L. turanica* in Turkmenistan which has now extended to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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