Dengue or Leptospirosis?

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The objective of the investigation was to determine if there is an underestimation of the cases of leptospirosis in relation to dengue in Puerto Rico. The need of the availability of the Microscopic Agglutination Tests for the detection of leptospirosis was also a concern. This investigation tries to avoid thousands of deaths as a result of a mistaken diagnose of leptospirosis with dengue, due to its clinical similarity with dengue, and the lack of tests for its detection. The hypothesis was that if there is a mistaken diagnose of leptospirosis, it is expected that there will be an overestimation in the cases of dengue in Puerto Rico. For this investigation information was obtained from professionals who work with data of both diseases in Puerto Rico and people who suffered leptospirosis. A medicine school and a hospital were visited to obtain data. It was found that in 1996, 30 out of 70 cases diagnosed as dengue proved to be leptospirosis when blood samples were analyzed at the Center for Disease Control (CDC). In 2009, 40 out of the 46 cases identified with leptospirosis had not been informed to the Health Department of Puerto Rico (HDPR). A total of 244 blood samples taken in a hospital at Guayama were sent to CDC for analysis. The analysis indicated that 110 samples were positive to leptospirosis. This data evidences that many cases diagnosed as dengue were really leptospirosis and that many of them were not reported to the HDPR. Therefore this hypothesis was accepted.

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