



&

Texas Chagas Taskforce presents:

International Chagas Day – April 14, 2017

Announcement/Press Release

Chagas Disease in Texas: What we don't know

Despite the fact that more than an estimated 300,000 people are living in the US with Chagas disease, and there is local transmission in Texas, most US Health Care providers still know very little about the disease.

San Antonio, Texas – April 14, 2017. The Texas Chagas Taskforce based in San Antonio came about in 2015 through a cooperative agreement with the The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health in San Antonio and the Centers for Disease Control. The Task Force is a 100 member strong and growing group of experts dedicated to raising awareness about this important disease. Although this disease is mostly prevalent in Latin America, we still have both locally contracted and imported cases of Chagas disease in the U.S., many of which go undiagnosed. Today, as we mark International Chagas Day, we take this opportunity to generate awareness about a silent and sometimes deadly disease.

Chagas is a non- contagious, and often asymptomatic, disease that is caused by a parasite called *Trypanosoma cruzi*. The parasite is found in the feces of an infected insect called a triatomine or more commonly known as a Kissing Bug. Someone may become infected if he or she comes into contact with the feces, usually left behind after the insect takes a blood-meal from the person at night while they are sleeping. The disease can also be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, by blood transfusion or an organ transplant. Most people infected with Chagas will not develop any symptoms (approximately 60-70%). However, for those who do progress on to having symptoms, sometimes years or decades after being infected, it can often be fatal.

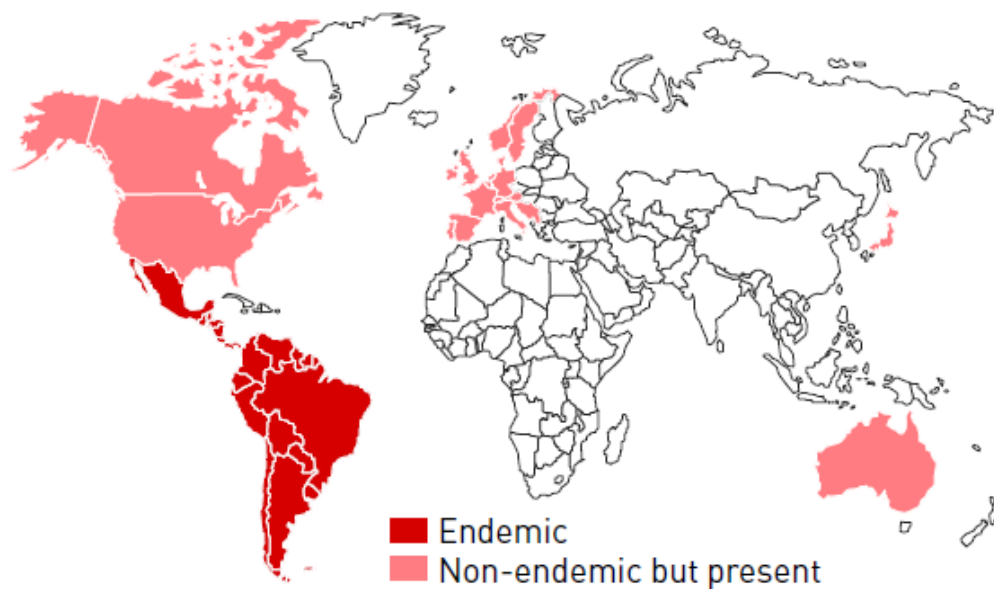
“If we want to better understand the prevalence of this disease in the U.S., we need doctors and patients to be aware of what their risks are for having the disease”, commented Dr. Paula Stigler Granados, Assistant Professor with UTHealth School of Public Health in San Antonio and lead for the Texas Chagas Taskforce. “Having lived in a Chagas endemic area or having a mother from an endemic

area is just one example of someone who may consider being tested for Chagas. This is a treatable and preventable disease if caught early.”

The U.S. began testing our blood supply for Chagas disease several years ago and since then more cases have been discovered. Because the disease can be without symptoms, it can be a surprise for someone to get a letter from the blood bank after donating blood stating they tested positive. It becomes very important for health care providers to know what to do next if a patient provides them with a positive blood test letter. There are commercially available lab tests for Chagas disease and most local and state health departments can help patients and health care providers with next steps for treatment if needed.

It is the goal of the Texas Chagas Taskforce to ensure that every health care provider in Texas and the U.S. knows about this silent disease so that we can start to have more conversations here in the U.S. about treatment and prevention. Below are some helpful links to various resources for Chagas disease. Please remember to contact your health care provider or local health department if you suspect you’ve been bitten by a kissing bug or have seen them inside your home.

Graphics:



Source: <https://www.dndi.org/diseases-projects/chagas/>



Photo credit: Dr. Gabe Hamer, Texas A&M <http://hamerlab.tamu.edu/>

Additional Resources:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer information for the general public as well as healthcare providers.

Fact Sheet for the Public in English:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/onepage.pdf>

Fact Sheet for the Public in Spanish:

https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/es/informativa_breve.pdf

Fact Sheet for Health Care Providers:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/factsheet.pdf>

What happens to blood donors who test positive?

https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/a_test-positive_chagas_flyer_508.pdf

A free continuing medical education (CME) course from the CDC is available online for health care providers: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cme/index.html>

Statewide resources are also available via the Texas Department of State Health Services:

<http://dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/chagas/>

Link to International Chagas Day video produced by the Texas Chagas Taskforce AND the UTHealth School of Public Health in San Antonio COMING SOON!

(Will be available on the UTHealth you tube channel before April 14th, stay tuned – we will let you know when its been uploaded <https://www.youtube.com/user/UTHSCH>)