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Do you know the persistence of challenges posed by Zoonotic Helminthes?

Shameeran Salman Ismael[1*], Beri Adil Tawfeq[1], Amal Jamil Sadiq[1]

[1] Medical Laboratory Sciences Department, College of Health Sciences, University of Duhok, Iraq
*Corresponding author: **shameeran.ismael@uod.ac**

ABSTRACT

Zoonotic helminths, parasitic worms capable of traversing species boundaries from animals to humans, present an enduring challenge to global public health. These intricate organisms encompass a diverse array of species, each possessing unique life cycles, transmission routes, and impacts on both animal and human populations. Despite significant advancements in medical science and public health initiatives, the multifaceted nature of zoonotic helminth infections continues to pose substantial hurdles in their prevention, control, and eradication. In this article, exploring the complexities surrounding zoonotic helminths and understanding the reasons behind their enduring challenge becomes imperative in shaping effective interventions and safeguarding the health and well-being of both animal and human populations globally.
Keywords: Helminths, Zoonotic Helminths, Environmental Changes, Resistance, Poor Sanitation, Eradication

1. Introduction:

Zoonotic helminths are parasitic worms that can be transmitted from animals to humans, leading to various diseases and health challenges [1,2]. Compared to viruses and bacteria, the group of parasites known as helminths has received less research, despite the possibility that they could one day represent a serious threat to humans. Helminths are macroparasites that are mainly known for chronic gastrointestinal tract infections; however, they can infect almost all human tissues. They are typically tapeworms (cestodes), roundworms (nematodes), or flatworms (trematodes) [3]. A massive disease load is caused by a small number of helminth species. Specifically, it is estimated that more than 25% of people are infected with schistosomiasis (Schistosoma spp.), soil-transmitted helminthiasis (*Necator americanus* and *Ascariasis lumbricoides*), and filariasis (*Wuchereria bancrofti*) [4,5]. While the process of helminth vectoring is not well understood, helminths are also known to act as carriers of other zoonoses, including the fever-causing bacteria *Neorickettsia sennestu*, which is spread by a trematode that is consumed by raw fish [6]. Moreover, zoonotic helminths are still emerging in human populations, a process that is anticipated to quicken due to increased demand for animal protein for human consumption, global livestock trade, and climate change [7]. Humans, domesticated animals, and wildlife all share a variety of parasitic helminths [8].

Helminths frequently have intricate life cycles that depend on one or more intermediate hosts [9]. The development of the juvenile life stages (eggs and larvae) and transfer to the definitive host, where the animal grows, reproduces, and creates propagules, depend on these intermediary hosts [10]. Numerous aquatic, terrestrial, wild, and domesticated animals can be considered intermediate hosts [10]. However, it is unclear how the identity of an intermediate host relates to the risk of helminthiasis in humans. Furthermore, transmission can happen indirectly (via the environment or an arthropod vector) or directly. From the standpoint of public health, soil-transmitted helminths are responsible for the majority of chronic infections [11]; yet, the majority of zoonotic helminths' mechanisms of transmission have not been documented. Therefore, determining the biological and ecological characteristics of helminths that are associated with zoonosis can aid in enhancing our comprehension of the elements that propel helminth zoonotic potential and in better controlling the risk of human transmission.

Transmission to humans can also be impacted by socioeconomic conditions unique to the areas where the parasites are present, in addition to basic biological and ecological aspects like the identification of final and intermediate hosts. At present, the majority of human helminth infections occur in middle and low income tropical nations [11,12], where healthcare facilities and disease prevention practices differ significantly. Ancylostoma and Necator, two genera of hookworms, are examples of neglected tropical illnesses that could be eradicated with appropriate medication administration and successful treatments. There may be more host species of potential zoonoses in this region of the world because of a highly determined cumulative community-level association risk of wildlife carrying a zoonotic helminth and the generally high animal biodiversity of tropical regions [7,13]. However, there is a significant chance that mammal hosts in temperate zones would harbor zoonotic helminth species [13]. This article hypothesized that the likelihood of a species infecting people might be predicted based on the geographic features of helminths. Although the global burden of human helminth infections varies greatly in terms of medical, educational, and economic aspects [12], it is not evident how various epidemiological and geographic characteristics connect to the possibility of helminth zoonotic infection.

1.1. Factors that affect the persistence of challenges associated with zoonotic helminths:

The persistence of challenges associated with zoonotic helminths arises due to several factors:

1. Zoonotic helminths have complex life cycles involving different hosts and environments. Understanding and interrupting these transmission pathways can be difficult, especially in areas where interactions between humans, animals, and the environment are intricate [14].
2. Many zoonotic helminths can infect multiple animal species, making control measures more challenging. This diversity of hosts can act as reservoirs for these parasites, making eradication or control efforts more complex [15].
3. Inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices in some regions contribute significantly to the spread of zoonotic helminths. Lack of access to clean water, proper waste

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disposal, and limited awareness about preventive measures increase the risk of transmission [16].

4. Certain environmental conditions favor the survival and transmission of zoonotic helminths. Factors such as climate change, ecological disruptions, and alterations in land use can impact the distribution and prevalence of these parasites [17].
5. In many regions, there's a lack of robust surveillance systems and control programs targeting zoonotic helminths. This deficiency hampers the early detection of infections and impedes timely intervention strategies [18].
6. Overuse or misuse of anthelmintic drugs can lead to the development of resistance in helminths, reducing the effectiveness of treatment options [19].
7. Traditional practices, dietary habits, and cultural beliefs in some communities might contribute to increased exposure to zoonotic helminths, hindering control efforts [16].

Addressing the challenges associated with zoonotic helminths requires a multifaceted approach involving improved public health infrastructure, education about hygiene practices, the implementation of effective surveillance and control measures, research on transmission dynamics, the development of new treatment options, and collaboration between healthcare professionals, veterinarians, policymakers, and communities to promote holistic control strategies.

2. Conclusion:

This article seeks to underscore the complexity of zoonotic helminth infections and emphasizes the imperative for comprehensive, integrated approaches to mitigate their impact on public health, underscoring the necessity for further research and concerted action to address these challenges. Also, this article provides a concise overview of the multifaceted challenges associated with zoonotic helminths, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to effectively tackle these persistent health concerns.

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