

Preliminary study of HTLV-I seroprevalence in Chilean Indian populations

Estudio preliminar de seroprevalencia de HTLV-I en población indígena Chilena.

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Aiming to seek the origin and define the prevalence of HTLV-1 infections, 464 blood samples from aboriginal populations proceeding from isolated regions of the north and south of Chile were studied. Antibodies against HTLV were measured with agglutination tests and confirmed with immuno-fluorescence and Western Blotting. Seven out of 107 (6.5%) blood samples from Atacama indians, 2 out of 202 (1%) from Mapuche indians and 3 out of 155 (1.9%) from Huilliche aborigines were positive. These results highlight an important presence of the virus in indigenous populations, specially in the extremes of the country. These findings could suggest an indigenous (mongoloid) origin of HTLV-1 in Chile, specially in Chiloe, where apparently there has been no contact with african or japanese populations, that could be the origin of the contamination.