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**The course of tularemia in Kosovo since the first outbreak in 1999**

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**Aims:** The purpose of this study is to provide a follow-up on the prevalence and incidence of tularemia in Kosovo after the occurrence of two post-war outbreaks in 1999 and 2001.

**Methods:** For surveillance, all ambulances and medical centers were obliged to fill in special reporting forms every week to report aggregate and individual data of a number of diseases, including tularemia, to the regional IPH who, subsequently, pass them to the central IPH. Here, the data were included in the central data base to be regularly analyzed by means of EPI-INFO software. Diagnostic sera were analysed with regard to specific antibodies to *Francisella tularensis* routinely using a micro-agglutination assay. Suspect sera were checked by highly specific ELISA and Western blot techniques directed against LPS of *F. tularensis*.

**Results:** During the tularemia outbreaks 1999 and 2001, 327 and 353 cases, respectively, were serologically confirmed as tularemia. It can be assumed from earlier statistics that the disease was not observed in humans in the region of Kosovo before. From 2003 to 2008, the number of reported tularemia cases decreased to a still relatively high level of approximately 100 cases per year with an incidence of over 4/100.000 inhabitants. The most affected age group was the one between 20-40 years, of which about 61% were female. Housewives (59%) and pupils (23%) were the main target population. The most important sources of infection were contaminated drinking water and food. The glandular (79%) and ulcero-glandular (21%) forms were now the dominant clinical manifestation. Today, the disease is spread over the entire territory of Kosovo.

**Conclusions:** As a result of the war and the subsequent environmental disruption, mass population displacements and a breakdown of sanitation and hygiene, two major outbreaks of tularemia preceded the establishment of an active endemic area of emerging or re-emerging tularemia in Kosovo.