

BARTONELLA SEROPREVALENCE IN RURAL THAILAND

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Abstract. We estimated the prevalence of anti-*Bartonella* antibodies among febrile and non-febrile patients presenting to community hospitals in rural Thailand from February 2002 through March 2003. Single serum specimens were tested for IgG titers to four *Bartonella* species, *B. henselae*, *B. quintana*, *B. elizabethae* and *B. vinsonii* subsp *vinsonii* using an indirect immunofluorescent assay. A titer $\geq 1:256$ was considered positive. Forty-two febrile patients (9.9%) and 19 non-febrile patients (19%) had positive serology titers to at least one *Bartonella* species. Age-standardized *Bartonella* seroprevalence differed significantly between febrile (10%) and non-febrile patients (18%, $p = 0.047$), but did not differ by gender. Among all 521 patients, IgG titers $\geq 1:256$ to *B. henselae* were found in 20 participants (3.8%), while 17 (3.3%) had seropositivity to *B. quintana*, 51 (9.8%) to *B. elizabethae*, and 19 (3.6%) to *B. vinsonii* subsp *vinsonii*. These results suggest exposure to *Bartonella* species is more common in rural Thailand than previously suspected.

Keywords: *Bartonella*, seroprevalence, Thailand

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