

Król M. E., Borawski B.

**A CLUSTER OF ALIMENTARY TICK-BORNE ENCEPHALITIS CASES IN PODLASKIE
VOIVODESHIP, POLAND**

Tutor Professor J. Zajkowska

*Department of Infectious Diseases and Neuroinfections
Medical University of Bialystok, Poland*

Introduction. Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a central nervous system disease caused by RNA virus belonging to *Flaviviridae* family. TBE is endemic in central and Eastern Europe, Siberia, far-eastern Russia, northern China and Japan. The TBE virus (TBEV) is mainly transmitted by *Ixodes* spp. tick bites but can also be contracted through consumption of unpasteurized milk from infected livestock. In Poland, TBE is endemic and approximately 200-300 cases are reported each year. The region with the highest TBE occurrence is north-eastern Poland, particularly Podlaskie Voivodeship, where nearly 50% of all TBE cases are reported. The outbreaks of milky epidemic of TBE in Poland were documented in years 1974, 1995 and 1996.

Aim. The aim of this report is to underline the risk of TBEV transmission by consumption of unpasteurized dairy products and to present clinical cases of 4 patients, who developed TBE as the result of ingestion of raw goat milk.

Material and methods. A retrospective analysis of 4 medical histories of patients was carried out. TBE was diagnosed based on clinical and epidemiological data and confirmed by serology tests.

Results and discussion. Patients were aged between 24 and 36 years old. All of the patients were monks and they domiciled in monastery. All four patients were on a vegetarian diet, in which the source of protein was the consumption of raw goat milk. None of the patients had been vaccinated against TBEV. All of the patients ingested raw goat milk from the same source. The disease course was mild and biphasic in all of the cases. Patients presented with influenza-like symptoms with concomitant fever and no meningeal signs. The blood and CSF examination in all patients were consistent with the TBE.

Conclusions. People in the TBE-endemic areas should not consume unpasteurized dairy products. There is a need to enhance public awareness about the possibility of transmitting TBEV by ingestion of raw milk products.