

Abstract

Triatomine bugs, also known as kissing bugs, are found throughout the United States. Kissing bugs may carry the protozoan *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the causative agent of Chagas disease. Once endemic to South and Central America, the protozoan has been found in kissing bugs throughout the Southern United States. It is unclear how far north *Trypanosoma cruzi* has been found in kissing bugs. The objective of this research was to determine if kissing bugs in the St. Louis area carry this protozoan. Kissing bugs were collected using a variety of methods, then processed using PCR and gel electrophoresis. The specimens were tested against positive and negative controls to conclude if the specimens were positive or negative for *Trypanosoma cruzi*. Six out of thirteen kissing bugs collected during the study were presumed positive for *Trypanosoma cruzi*. Although the sample size was small, kissing bugs in the St. Louis area have been found to carry this protozoan. Patient and provider education regarding Chagas disease is needed to help manage the spread of the disease.