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Resurgence of Tularemia in Georgia, 2024: Continuing Trends and Emerging Patterns

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Background

Tularemia is a zoonotic disease caused by *Francisella tularensis*, capable of causing severe illness in humans. Clinical forms include ulceroglandular, glandular, and pneumonic types. In Georgia, tularemia surveillance began in 1946. Between 2018 and 2022, only 1-2 cases were reported annually. However, in 2023, a notable increase was observed, with 16 confirmed cases in eastern regions and mostly in spring through autumn. This study presents tularemia data from 2024.

Methods

Tularemia is classified in Georgia as an especially dangerous pathogen requiring immediate reporting. Data were extracted from Electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance System (EIDSS). Probable cases had compatible symptoms and a positive micro-agglutination test (MAT); confirmed cases met additional laboratory and epidemiological criteria.

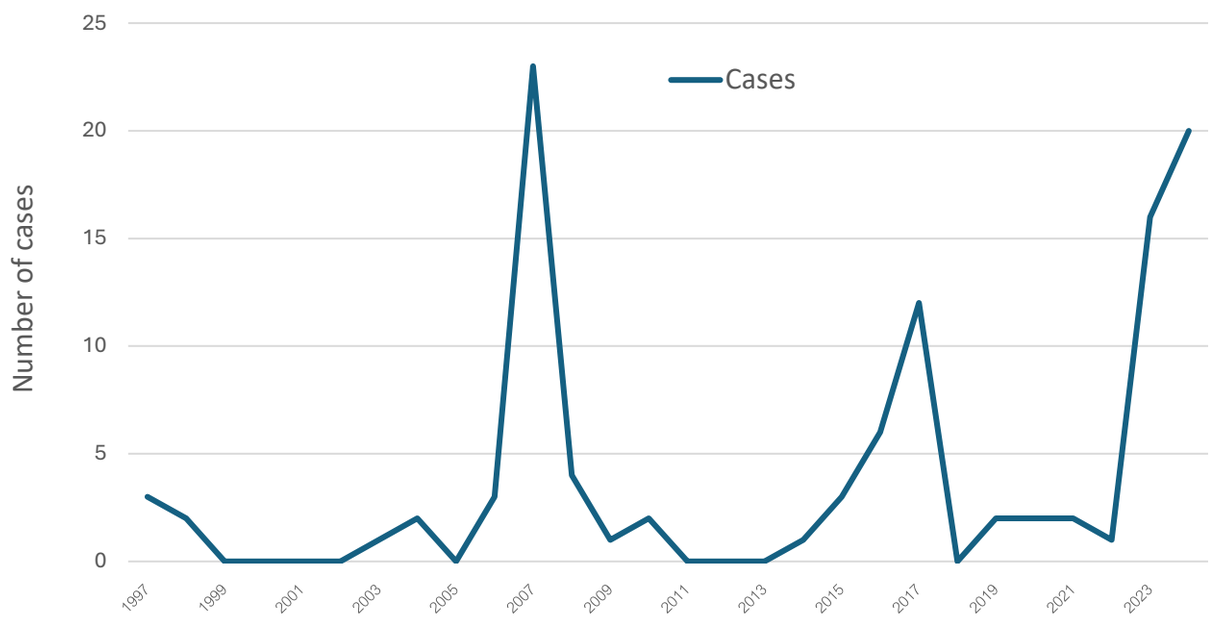

Figure 1. Annual distribution of confirmed tularemia cases in Georgia.

Results

In 2024, 20 confirmed tularemia cases were recorded (10 male, 10 female) (Figure 1). The average age of the patients was 37.95 years, with a range from 13 to 62 years (Figure 2). Clinical presentations included ulceroglandular (70%), glandular (20%), and pneumonic (10%) forms (Figure 3). In all cases, exposure occurred in eastern part of the country; however, all patients were diagnosed in Tbilisi. Seasonal distribution was as follows: winter (25%), spring (60%), and summer (15%).

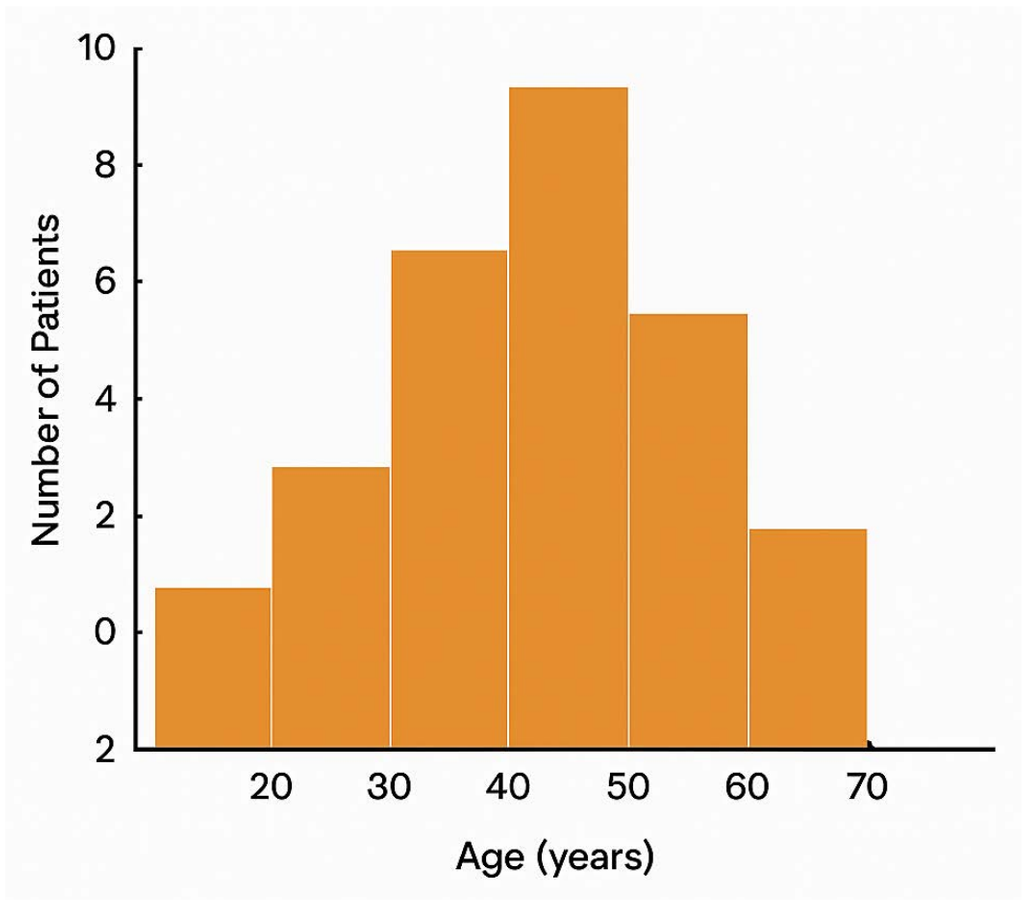

Figure 2. Clinical presentations of tularemia cases in 2024.

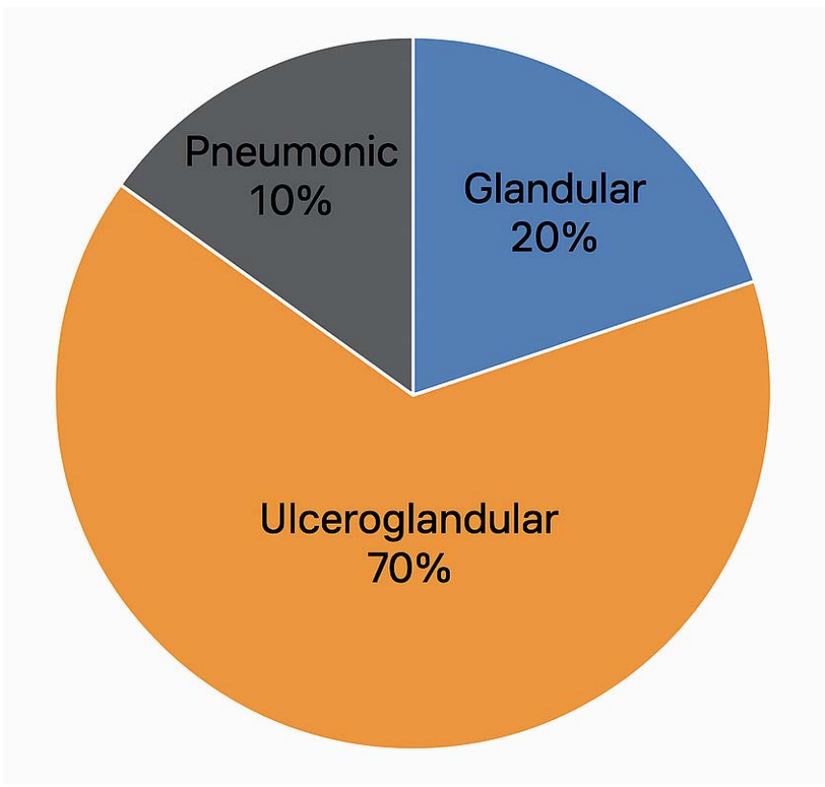

Figure 3. Clinical presentations of tularemia cases in 2024.

Conclusions

The continued rise in tularemia cases suggests a sustained epidemiological shift. Strengthening surveillance, public health preparedness, and intersectoral collaboration is essential. Further investigation into environmental sources and animal reservoirs is needed to better understand and mitigate ongoing transmission.

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