

Prevalence of scabies in Sanma Province, Vanuatu, 2017

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Background

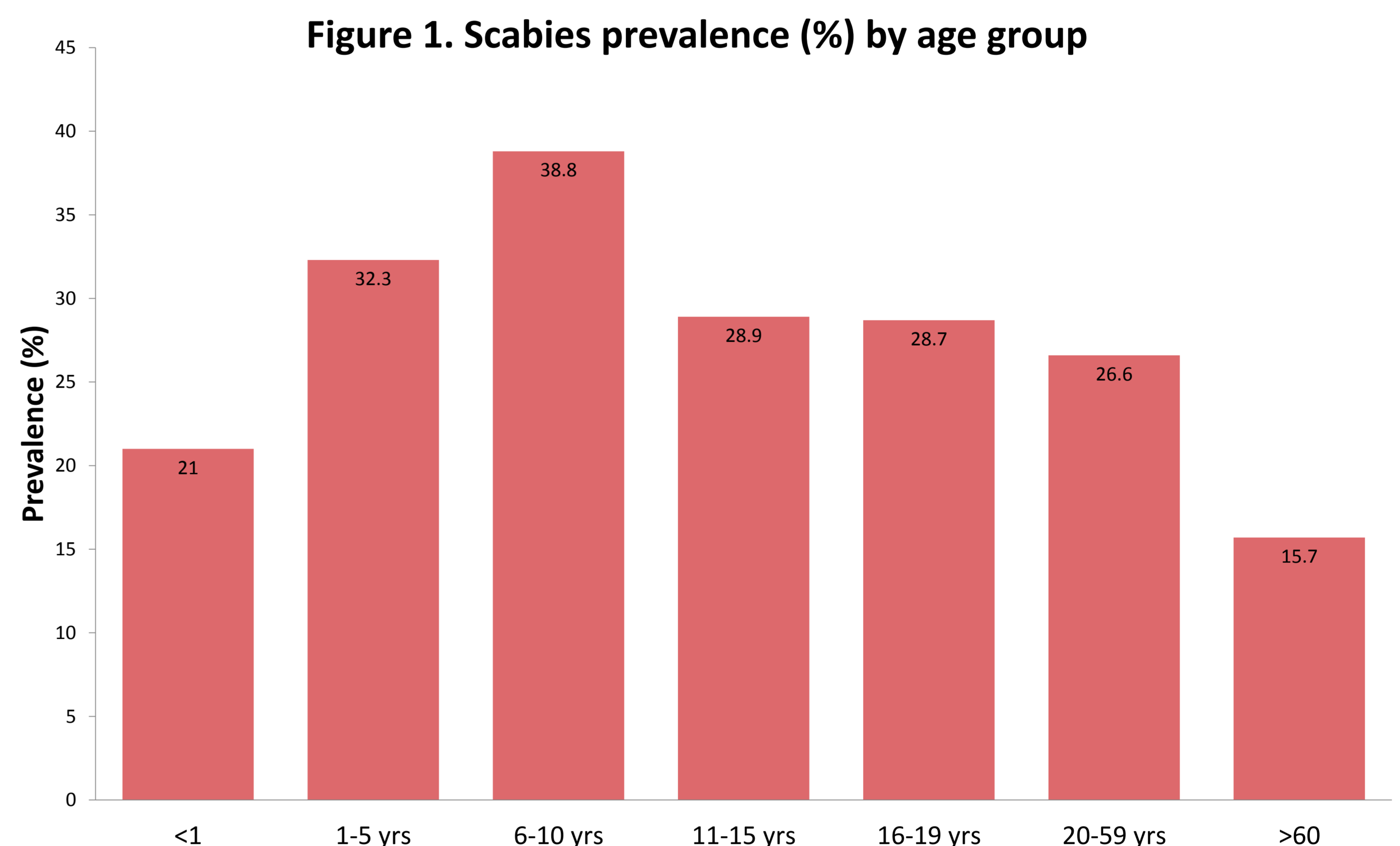
- Scabies is a skin infection caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei var hominis* and is transmitted via skin-to-skin contact.
- Scabies is a common, under-reported condition in the Pacific with acute and chronic complications
- The epidemiology of scabies in Vanuatu had not been studied in nearly 30 years
- In this study we explored the prevalence of scabies in Sanma Province, Vanuatu

Methods

- We randomly selected 30 villages from nine government zones across three islands in Sanma Province using a two-stage stratified sampling approach
- All village residents present during the study team visit were eligible to participate
- Skin examinations were undertaken by doctors
- Participants diagnosed with scabies were treated as per the Vanuatu Health Worker's Manual
- Bivariate analysis and multilevel models were conducted to investigate associated demographic and household factors

Results

- There were 1879 participants from 1045 households and 30 villages included.
- This sample was representative of the 2017 census but with a greater proportion of children aged 1–5 y (18.1 vs 12.2%).
- Many participants lived in remote settings, with 25% having a travel time of >6 h to the hospital and 22% needing to travel multiple days.
- Overall, 563 participants had scabies (all-ages prevalence 30%, 95% CI 27.9 to 32.1). The prevalence of scabies varied by age, with a peak prevalence in children aged 6–10 y (38.8%, 95% CI 33.9 to 44)
- Associated factors for scabies included previous treatment and long travel time to the provincial hospital



Conclusions and Recommendations

- We observed a high prevalence of scabies in Sanma Province (30%)
- The study highlights the importance of accessing the most isolated areas where disease burden may be highest
- The highest prevalence of scabies among children aged 6-10 years (~40%). This is similar to the prevalence in Fiji
- This study highlights the need for public health measures to control the considerable burden of disease in Vanuatu, along with other Pacific Island countries, with special attention to the most isolated regions

Full report

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