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Potential rabies exposure incidents & vaccination prevalence amongst tourists and expatriates in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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My aim is to determine the prevalence and characteristics of rabies vaccination and potential rabies exposure incidents amongst foreigners in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Data collection was done on a convenience sample population outside main tourist sites in Phnom Penh during August 2014 through a questionnaire-based survey. A total of 57 questionnaires were completed. 63% of participants were tourists with the remainder being expatriate workers. The prevalence of rabies vaccination was 44% in tourists and 55% in expatriates. Half of those questioned reported coming into close contact with a possible rabies host animal. 25% of these had a potentially significant rabies exposure incident - defined as a lick, bite or scratch - most commonly from a dog, cat or rodent. These incidents most frequently occurred whilst outdoors, followed by home, hostels and restaurants. Only one participant reports seeking medical attention post-exposure which was after a serious dog bite. There was no difference in the rate of exposure incidents between unvaccinated and vaccinated groups. Tourists were less likely to report a significant potential rabies exposure incident than expatriates (16% vs 38%). There is little data on potential rabies exposure incidents amongst travellers and expatriates in the tropics. Compared to other studies, Cambodia has a high prevalence of rabies vaccination amongst foreigners. This study highlights a high potential rabies exposure prevalence amongst foreigners, especially expatriates. It seems likely this would be replicated across SE Asia. This should be considered when counselling travellers on appropriate vaccination regimen.