Southeast Asian J Trop Med Public Health. 2001 Mar;32(1):23-6.

Geo-helminth infections in a rural area of Sri Lanka.

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Source

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Abstract

School children carry the heaviest burden of morbidity due to intestinal helminth infection. The objective of this investigation was to study geo-helminth infections in 349 school children aged 6 to 13 years living in a rural area of Sri Lanka. Stool samples were examined by direct saline smear in an initial survey to determine the prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections and thereafter the children were followed up over a two year period with cross sectional surveys of stool samples being carried out at yearly intervals. Following collection of a stool sample, all the subjects were treated with mebendazole 500 mg as a single dose. Weights and heights were measured using standardized procedures. 2 ml of venous blood were collected from each subject under aseptic conditions to determine hematological indices. The prevalence of geo-helminth infections was low, and the prevalence declined during the two-year period from 5.4% in 1997 to 2.2% in 1998 and 2.0% in 1999 following yearly mass anti-helminth treatment. The incidence density was 0.021 cases per child year. The reduction in the prevalence from the baseline to the second survey is probably due to the reduction of the reservoir of infection among children as a result of mass treatment at baseline. The prevalence of infection during the second and third surveys were almost the same probably due to infections originating from other segments of the untreated population.