

**Intestinal parasites of the under fives in the Mahaiyyawa slums : some socio-economic and behavioural factors that influence prevalence.**

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A study on the intestinal parasites of under-fives was carried out in two adjacent communities in Kandy, known as the Mahaiyyawa model tenements and the municipal council (MC) lines. The objectives were firstly, to assess the prevalence of intestinal parasites in this group of children and secondly, to evaluate some socioeconomic and behavioural factors which may contribute towards the maintenance of these infections. The overall prevalence of pathogenic protozoa was very low: two samples were positive for giardia lamblia (0.7 per cent) and one for cryptosporidium oocysts (0.3 per cent). The overall prevalence of geohelminths was 26.4 per cent. *Ascaris lumbricoides* was the predominant helminth (23.8 per cent prevalence); *trichuris trichiura* was the next most common (7.2 per cent). Mixed infections with *A.lumbricoides* and *T.trichiura* and/or hookworm was seen in 5.5 per cent. The age related prevalence was 10.3, 27.3, 23.2, 37.7 and 33.3 per cent in the 0-12, 13-24, 25-36, 37-48 and 49-60 month age groups respectively. The majority of both roundworm and whipworm infections were mild (83.7 per cent and 91.7 per cent resp.); the rest were of moderate intensity. All the hookworm infections (1.7 per cent prevalence) were mild. Factors which were found to be significantly related to prevalence were the ethnic group, the socioeconomic status and the level of maternal education. Prevalence was significantly higher in the MC lines than in the model tenements (32.2 and 15.4 per cent resp.) probably because of its predominantly Indian Tamil population. the lower socioeconomic status and the low level of maternal education.