

ROTA VIRUS INFECTION AMONG SRI LANKAN CHILDREN — A PILOT STUDY

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Acute gastroenteritis is the leading cause of death among children under the age of two years in developing countries. Specific bacterial pathogens have been detected only in some 20-40% of such episodes of diarrhoeal disease. Studies in developing as well as developed countries have shown that rota viruses are the commonest cause of acute non bacterial gastroenteritis.¹ The epidemiology of rota virus infection in Sri Lanka has so far not been studied.

A pilot study was therefore conducted in the University Paediatric Unit, Colombo from December '79 — March '80 on a selected number of children most likely to be having rota virus infection. Thus the stools of 18 children below the age of five years and presenting with diarrhoea of less than four days duration were examined by Electron microscopy after negative staining with 3% Phosphotungstic acid.

77% of stools examined contained rota virus. Maximum incidence was around the end of the first year. The majority of virus infected children presented with watery diarrhoea (70%) and vomiting (76%). Most were well nourished (92%) and mildly dehydrated (93%). Only 15 were febrile.

To our knowledge, this is the first report of rota virus infection among Sri Lankan Children.

Reference:

1. BANATVALA J. E. (1979) in Clinics in Gastroenterology, 8, 3, 569. Ed. H. P. Lambert W. B. Saunders Company Ltd., London.

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