

SHIGELLA DYSENTERIAE TYPE 1 INFECTION
IN SRI LANKAN CHILDREN

Innocent Jayawardene, Lalitha Mendis,
Kamalika Abeyratne*, S.D. Mendis* & H.A. Nanayakkara
Dept. of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine,
University of Colombo
*Children's Hospital, Colombo.

Bacillary dysentery caused by Shigella dysenteriae - type 1 is a serious health problem in Sri Lanka. Between April 1988 and June 1990, 147 of 1669 consecutive cases of diarrhoea admitted to two wards in the Children's Hospital and investigated, were infected with Shigella dysenteriae I. Isolations and identifications were made using standard plating techniques, biochemical tests and serology.

The highest incidence of Shigella dysenteriae 1 was observed between October and December 1988 (29 of 150 - 20%). The age group (Median age 5 years and mean age 5 years and 8 months) was older than children hospitalized with diarrhoea from other causes.

On analysing the available clinical histories of 67 cases, 20 (30%) gave a contact history of diarrhoea, 86.5% presented with blood and mucus diarrhoea, 83.5% were febrile, 24% showed some degree of dehydration, and 61% were moderately or severely malnourished.

Complications included proctocolitis (1 case) malabsorption (2 cases) disseminated intra-vascular coagulation (1 case) and haemolytic uraemic syndrome (1 case). 11% progressed to persistent diarrhoea. 2 deaths occurred.

92.5% were given antibiotic therapy. About 80% of 147 isolates were resistant to cotrimoxazole, ampicillin, and nalidixic acid. Nearly 100% of isolates were sensitive to cefotaxime, ceftazidime, gentamicin and cephalixin. 63.2% of isolates were sensitive to mecillinam.

Of 20 Shigella dysenteriae I isolates, nineteen (95%) had the 120 kb plasmid.