A-06: Intestinal parasitoses in the Kandy area: prevalence in slum children and adult out-patients

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Prevalence rates of intestinal parasitoses vary widely with time and location even within the same country, because they are influenced by environmental, social and cultural factors and the economic conditions of a given community. Up-to-date estimation of local prevalence rates are therefore required if meaningful health care is to be provided. The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of pathogenic intestinal parasitic infections in two populations in the Kandy area: (i) Children under the age of 5 years living in a slum community in Mahaiyyawa (n=303),and (ii)patients attending a Medical out-patient clinic at the Teaching Hospital Peradeniya between Oct. 1992 and April 1993 (n=185).

A single stool sample was obtained from each child/adult and examined for the presence of intestinal parasites using both a direct smear and a formol-ether concentration technique. It was
not possible to examine multiple stool samples from each individual because of very poor compliance when such samples were requested.

The overall prevalence of helminth infections among the children was 25.7% (prevalence of roundworm - 21.8%, whipworm - 7.3% hookworm - 1.7%, mixed infections - 4.9%) and among adults was 20% (roundworm - 10.8%, whipworm - 4.9%, hookworm - 6.5%, mixed - 1.6%). Despite the detection of several non-pathogenic protozoa *(Iodamoeba butschlii, Entamoeba coli, Endolimax nana),* there was only one case of giardiasis (prevalence 0.33%) among the children and no other pathogenic protozoa were detected in either group.

We have found a relatively low prevalence of helminth infections in two populations in the Kandy area. Furthermore, pathogenic protozoal infections seem to be extremely rare, although examination of only one stool sample from each individual may have reduced the chance for detection of protozoal infections. Nevertheless, our results support clinical impressions that amoebiasis has now become uncommon in this area. Our findings can at least partly be explained by the widespread use of anti- parasitic drugs.