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Evaluation of the single-dose diethylcarbamazine citrate (DEC) mass treatment programme for filariasis in Colombo

We assessed the effectiveness of drug distribution and compliance with the mass chemotherapy programme in the Divisional Secretariat of Colombo. Six Grama Sevaka divisions were randomly selected in which 170 households were randomly selected from the householder's lists.

One hundred and sixty three (i.e. 95.9%) chief occupants were aware of the filariasis control programme but most were un ware of the rationale for complying. DEC had been collected for 368 individuals but only 280 had swallowed it, giving a drug collection rate of 50.4% and a compliance of 76.1%. The study population included 94 school children, received the drug but did not swallow it, offered varying reasons for this: 21 (23.7%) forget, 19 (21.6%) thought it unnecessary as they were in good health, 17 (19.3%) cited side effects experienced by others, 15 (17%) were on other medications and feared interactions, 12 (13.6) differed due to various myths and 4 (4.5%) feared that the drug had expired.

The only significant side effect was giddiness, experienced by 6(2.1%). The propaganda appears adequate in this respect. However the benefits of treatment de not seem to be clear enough, since the DEC was not collected by almost half the study population.