

A study on the usage of anthelmintics among mothers in the Colombo district

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This is a descriptive cross sectional study to assess the knowledge of the mothers living in urban and rural areas of the Colombo district with regard to the use of anthelmintics for their children. The study population comprised of 200 mothers (100 each from urban and rural areas). A pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data on income, educational background, knowledge, attitudes and practices with regard to anthelmintic usage.

No statistically significant effect of maternal age ($\chi^2=0.76$; $p=0.86$), parity ($\chi^2=0.50$; $p=0.48$), or residence -urban/rural ($\chi^2=0.13$; $p=0.75$) was observed on the use of anthelmintics. The rural mothers appear to commence deworming their children at an earlier age than their urban counterparts ($\chi^2=8.47$; $p=0.04$). Mothers who had studied up to tertiary level were less likely to deworm their children ($\chi^2=23.71$; $p<0.01$). The name of anthelmintic drug prescribed was known by 29.2% of urban and 35.9% of rural mothers ($\chi^2=1.96$; $p=0.37$). Only 12% ($n=25$) were aware that anthelmintics could cause minor side effects and this knowledge was similar in the urban and rural mothers ($\chi^2=0.35$; $p=0.56$). Among them only 44% could think of at least one side effect correctly. The General Practitioner was a significant source of anthelmintics with 63.8% ($n=67$) urban and 71.2% ($n=74$) rural mothers obtaining exclusively from a General Practitioner ($\chi^2=4.11$; $p=0.25$) and the price of the drugs varied from less than Rs. 20/= to more than Rs. 200/=. Among anthelmintic users, 70.0% gave anthelmintics regularly even in the absence of symptoms. This was of borderline significance ($p=0.04$) between urban and rural populations. (urban 63.4%, rural 76.8%; $\chi^2=4.28$; $p=0.04$). The majority (79%) believed that anthelmintics were safe to use during pregnancy (urban 72.1%, $n=75$; rural 85.0%, $n=91$; $\chi^2=5.26$; $p=0.02$). The basic knowledge regarding anthelmintics and their use is not satisfactory among mothers. As a majority of mothers received treatment from the General Practitioners, a more active role by them in educating patients is recommended. This study indicates that mothers who had a higher educational level used less anthelmintics. Hence special measures would have to be undertaken to address this group.

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