

Anthelmintic prescribing patterns of a sample of General Practitioners in the Colombo district of Sri Lanka

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General Practitioners (GPs) provide first contact care for children and pregnant mothers in the community. This study ascertained the prescribing pattern of anthelmintics to children and pregnant women by a sample of GPs from the district of Colombo. From 13 Divisional Secretariat Divisions in the district, 10 Grama Niladhari divisions were selected randomly. 200 medical practitioners engaged in full time General Practice (100 urban and 100 rural), were selected randomly as clusters of 10 from each GN division. A pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data. A total of 183 GPs participated with 94 being from urban areas. The majority of GPs were of the 31-40 year age group. 70% GPs were male. Almost 13% of GPs from urban areas had a Postgraduate degree in comparison to 4.5% from the rural areas. Over 50% of GPs had 6-20 years of service and over 30% treated 16-30 patients daily. 73% of GPs from rural areas accessed health related reading material daily or weekly. All GPs prescribed anthelmintics to children. Although nearly 80% of individuals preferred to de-worm at six month intervals, less than 40% from either actually did so regularly. Only 50% of urban and rural GPs commenced de-worming when the child was one year old. Pyrantel pamoate was the preferred anthelmintic used for children by both groups (63%). A higher

number of rural GPs (73%) prescribed Pyrantel pamoate than their urban counterparts (53%; $p < 0.05$). Approximately 54% and 64% of GPs from urban and rural areas respectively, prescribed anthelmintics during pregnancy. A majority of GPs (61% urban and 86% rural) prescribed drugs after the first trimester. However, 25% from urban areas gave drugs during any trimester ($p < 0.001$). More GPs from urban areas (84%) prescribed mebendazole ($p < 0.001$) while those from rural areas (58%) gave albendazole ($p < 0.001$). Regression analysis revealed that GPs with post graduate qualifications ($\beta = 1.48$; $OR = 4.39$) and those having frequent access to health related material ($\beta = -1.23$; $OR = 0.29$) prescribed anthelmintics to pregnant women more often than those without. Only 37% of urban and 24% of rural practitioners de-wormed the children at regular intervals. 46% of urban and 36% of rural practitioners failed to prescribe any anthelmintic to pregnant women.

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