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Malaria surveillance in a post conflict district of Sri Lanka and patient satisfaction regarding surveillance activities

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With the incidence of malaria in Sri Lanka declining, parasitological surveillance has been identified as a key component to achieve elimination by 2014. Tropical and Environmental Diseases and Health Associates (TEDHA) Private limited in collaboration with the Anti Malaria Campaign has established 45 laboratories in four post conflict districts of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. This study assesses the pattern of referral of patients with fever for malaria diagnosis by health care providers (HCPs) in four government hospitals in one of the districts of the Northern Province and patient satisfaction with regard to the laboratory services offered.

A cross sectional prospective study assesses the number of fever patients presenting to the hospital, number referred by the HCP for blood smear examination for malaria and number that underwent the investigation. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to assess patient satisfaction which was graded on a scale of 0-5.

Of the 44.3% fever patients referred for malaria diagnosis, 81.7% underwent the investigation. Referral depended largely on the presence of a permanent HCP. Over 86% of the individuals were highly satisfied with the overall laboratory services, while comfort within the laboratory was satisfactory in three of the four hospitals.

Incidence of malaria is low based on the differential diagnosis in patients with fever even in previously high malaria endemic areas. The low incidence of malaria cases being reported from the country has also contributed to this. The referral was less in hospitals where there was no permanent doctor. Intensive surveillance is required to prevent a resurgence of the disease. Following this study, motions were set in place to ensure further improvement of the quality of diagnostic services provided by TEDHA.

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