

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES IN REGARD TO OPISTHORCHIASIS IN TWO VILLAGES IN LAO PDR

Hanne Strandgaard¹, Maria Vang Johansen¹, Jens Aagaard-Hansen¹, Pricha Petlueng²
and Niels Ørnbjerg¹

¹DBL-Center for Health Research and Development, Department of Veterinary Pathobiology, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Charlottenlund, Denmark; ²Vectorborne and other Parasitic Diseases, World Health Organization, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Abstract. The aim of the present study was to assess local perceptions and practices in regard to opisthorchiasis in a village receiving treatment and health education compared to a village where no intervention was offered. The study was conducted two years after a health education campaign had been carried out. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were performed among 68 men and women. The results of the study show there were distinct differences in perceptions about opisthorchiasis when comparing the two villages. It appears that introducing health education alongside treatment does have an effect on knowledge and change in behavior. Eating raw fish was mainly practiced by men, however women were not aware they were exposed to opisthorchiasis while preparing food. Although there is no locally derived term, a medically appointed term for opisthorchiasis was acknowledged. Due to the vague disease symptoms, no treatment seeking behavior was found in relation to the disease. Further studies are needed to shed light on gender differences in regard to eating behavior and to assess infection risk among different Lao dishes containing freshwater fish.

Correspondence: Hanne Strandgaard, DBL Center for Health Research and Development, Department of Veterinary Pathobiology, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Jaegersborg Allé 1D, DK-2920 Charlottenlund, Denmark.
E-mail: hstrandgaard@hotmail.com