

PREVALENCE OF CLINICAL MALARIA AMONG AN ORANG ASLI COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract. An epidemiological cross-sectional study was undertaken to determine the prevalence of clinical malaria among the Orang Asli population of Raub, Pahang, Malaysia. The study was conducted on a representative sample of 520 Orang Asli. Malariometric and clinical measurements were taken. The overall parasitemic rate was 24.2% (95% CI 20.7-28.1). Twenty-three point four percent (95% CI 19.5-26.9) of respondents age two years and above were clinically febrile. The prevalence of fever, chills, perspiration and body aches during a one month period prior to the survey among the same group ranged between 4.2% (95% CI 2.7-6.4) and 13.5% (95% CI 10.6-16.7). Children 2-12 years old were more likely to present with fever, and symptoms of malaria than older children. Gender was not significantly associated with fever or any of the other malaria symptoms. Presence of clinical fever and history of malaria symptoms were all strongly associated with current infection. The association was significant even after controlling for age (adjusted OR 2.8-5.1, 95% CI 1.1-8.3). Orang Asli children significantly experienced greater morbidity due to malaria compared to adults. Control and treatment of malaria should focus on children, while further research should explore the effects of malaria morbidity on the quality of life of these children.

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