

ASSESSMENT OF A SCHOOL-BASED MASS TREATMENT FOR SOIL-TRANSMITTED HELMINTH INFECTIONS IN CAPIZ, THE PHILIPPINES

Kristina M Bacon¹, Mirat Shah², Laura Taylor², Bernard Jonas C Macatangay³, Peter Veldkamp³ and Vicente Y Belizario Jr⁴

¹Department of Infectious Disease and Microbiology, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh; ²University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; ³Division of Infectious Diseases, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA; ⁴Department of Parasitology, College of Public Health and National Institutes of Health, University of the Philippines Manila, Manila, Philippines

Abstract. We evaluated the War on Worms in the Western Visayas (WOW-V) school-based mass treatment strategy in Capiz, the Philippines by assessing potential determinants of program acceptance among parents, teachers, and local health and education officials involved. Written surveys were distributed to parents and teachers assessing knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections. Associations between data were examined using the Fisher's exact test ($\alpha = 0.05$). Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests were employed to analyze teacher survey results. Local health and education officials participated in key-informant interviews (KIs) to evaluate their attitudes and practices regarding WOW-V; data was qualitatively analyzed and grouped. A strong association was observed between parental consent during the first two rounds of treatment and willingness to do so again. Most parents gave consent for their child to receive treatment at least once and demonstrated a high level of knowledge regarding STH infections. The majority of teachers had positive attitudes toward their role in the program. Many identified lack of training and a fear of side effects as barriers to higher coverage. Lack of funding, program monitoring difficulties and insufficient parental education were identified by local officials as barriers. Proper planning and design is important to achieve high initial consent for program acceptance. The results correlate with studies showing relationships between health education and treatment acceptance. The implementation of health education and monitoring measures has the potential to greatly improve both treatment coverage and program infrastructure.

Keywords: soil transmitted helminthes, mass treatment, school-based, Philippines

Correspondence: Kristina Bacon, 3520 Forbes Avenue, First Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA.
Tel: (724) 766-2747
E-mail: kmb148@pitt.edu