

ARTHROPOD BORNE DISEASES AMONG THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN URBAN AREAS IN IRAN

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Abstract Health status has a powerful influence on a child's learning and how well a child performs in school. Children who suffer from parasitic infections or other diseases do not have potential for learning as healthy children. Therefore the attention to their health is vital. One of the most important approaches to promote quality of health is health education. School children who are not aware of the impacts of disease on their life quality and do not know about the ways of transmission of pathogens, they, themselves are one of the spread agents of disease among their family. So it is necessary to train children about the diseases and their risk factors and routes of their transmission.

The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence rates of the Arthropod Borne diseases in children of urban areas throughout the country and the results of this study will be used as a baseline for Health education authorities to design a health educational program for motivation and assisting students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease and reduce health related risk behaviors.

A five-year record data about communicable diseases was collected from the reports of health authorities of 24 provinces, in order to present an exhaustive review of Arthropod Borne diseases among primary school children in urban areas because of having a health instructor, during 1992 - 1998.

Among, the most prevalent of Arthropod Borne diseases in primary school students were four diseases, pediculosis, scabies, cutaneous leishmaniasis and malaria, respectively.

Pediculosis. A disease transmitted by head lice, was the most common infection in all provinces but the highest rates were from Sistane and Balochestan, Kordestan and Kermanshah with a peak of 22%. The median of total percentage showed 2.4%. The prevalence rate was higher among girls than boys. The trend of this infection showed no variations during the 5-year study. According to this study, sex has an important role in infestation of pediculosis among school children. The risk factors in this disease are the long hair of girls and parent's prejudice with regard to cutting their children's hair.

Scabies. This mite is prevalent in school children was very low. This disease was the most prevalent in Gilan province with a rate of 0.44%. The overall median throughout country during the 5-year study was 0.04%. The prevalence rate was higher among girls than boys but the differences were not significant. The trend of disease showed a mild reduction during 1992-1998. The results showed that these diseases are more prevalent in the deprived provinces because of higher illiteracy and poor hygienic consideration.

Cutaneous leishmaniasis. This disease is endemic in Iran and distributed almost in all provinces. This study showed the most infected provinces with urban CL were Isfahan , Fars , Kerman with a prevalence rate of 0.22%, 0.13% and 0/11% respectively. The overall median throughout country during the 5-year study was 0.4% per 100,000 population. The prevalence rate was higher among girls than boys. The trend of disease did not show any variations during 1992-

1998. The health care worker should consider the possibility of CL in children with chronic skin lesions who are in areas where Leishmaniasis is endemic.

Malaria. This is one of the health problems in south and southeast part of the country. But despite this fact, the highest prevalence rate of malaria in school children belongs to Khorasan province with a rate of 1.4 per 1000 primary school children which most of them being imported cases from neighboring countries. The trend of disease showed a statistically significant reduction during 1992-1998. Despite higher incidence rate among boys than girls, the differences were not statistically significant.

In Primary school, the control of arthropod borne diseases could be done by using personal protective measures to decrease risk for infection. It is necessary to allow health care workers to design an integrated schools, students and parents plan to develop and enhancing health – related knowledge, attitudes and practice.