TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

INTESTINAL PARASITIC INFECTIONS IN TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA: A POPULATION BASED STUDY

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Introduction: Intestinal parasites cause considerable morbidity and mortality in the world, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. Both urban and rural inhabitants are vulnerable to infection with intestinal parasites in Tigray Region (Ethiopia).

Objective: To describe the occurrence of intestinal parasitic infections in Tigray region and the knowledge, attitudes and behavior regarding the prevention of these infections, in order to orient the design of control and prevention programmes.

Materials and Methods: a cross-sectional study was realized to investigate both the prevalence of intestinal parasites, and Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) related to the prevention
of parasitic infection in a selected population of the Tigray Region. The study included both the administration of a closed-ended questionnaire to collect personal information as well as information on knowledge and practices related to parasites infections, and the collection and analysis of stool samples from the population.

Results: 1200 people were included in this study. Stoll test positive for parasites was found in 630 people (52.5%); 59 persons (9.36%) had co-infection with 2 parasites, and 2 (0.31%) with 3 parasites. The most prevalent parasite found was Entamoeba histolytica/dispar (17.75%) followed by Giardia lamblia (12.58%) and Ascaris lumbricoides (7.92%). The infected population reported, more than uninfected one ($p<0.002$), that they were taking the water to drink or cook from natural sources or from well, and that usually they took bath in rivers/lakes/rainy water ($p<0.03$). The large majority of adults (74.5%) thought that eating raw fruit or vegetables was the main cause of parasitic infection.

Conclusions: Our study confirms that intestinal parasitic infections are still an important public health problem in Tigray and suggests an association between access to safe water and parasitoses. The results suggest the need to improve people's knowledge and behaviours for the prevention of intestinal parasitoses.