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

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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 (α = 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