

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN INFESTED WITH COMMUNITY ACQUIRED SCABIES IN DENSELY POPULATED RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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Background: Outbreaks of scabies in residential institutions is not reported so far particularly on socio-economic consequences.

Study design: Community-based clinico-epidemiological study in children from randomly selected 6 institutions in Dhaka.

Objectives: Study socio-economic profile, water-sanitation facilities, personal hygiene and living conditions of these children.

Methodology: Prospective study (clinical Check up & direct interviews).

Results: Of 492 scabies-infested-children, 92.5% were boys (mean age: 11.2±2.4 years), 63% of fathers and 98% mothers of whom were illiterate/had primary education. While 55% of their fathers were low-paid workers, 99% mothers were housewives. Of 98% children with scabies, 71% had been re-infected (96% during winter), randomly assigned anti-scabies drugs revealing a cure rate of 85.5%. Majority (74%) used to live in poorly-ventilated damp rooms with bizarre/overcrowded sleeping arrangements and had poor personal hygiene: 21% shared towels; 8% shared undergarments; 30% shared bed linen; and 81% kept their used clothes on same communal string/shelf. Sanitation was poor too: 39% bathed infrequently, although 97% used to do mandatory ablution. Most children (61%) washed their clothes (including undergarments) 2-3 times a fortnight, 35% did so every 2-3 days and 3.7% washed their clothes on alternative days. Disease severity and re-infection were associated with infrequent washing of clothes ($P < 0.001$) and bed linen ($P < 0.001$), overcrowded sleeping arrangements ($P < 0.001$) and infrequent bathing without ($P < 0.001$) & with soap ($P < 0.001$)-which was related to family income ($P < 0.001$, both).

Conclusion: These findings having potentially dangerous implications for public health, demands immediate attention to developing sustainable long-term intervention programs to combat scabies hyperendemicity (?silent epidemics) to save thousands of children from impending serious complications.