

การป้องกันและควบคุมโรคหนอนพยาธิในเด็กเล็ก อ.ท่าศาลา จ.นครศรีธรรมราช

Prevention and Control of Helminthiasis in Young Children, Tha Sala District, Nakhon Si Thammarat

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In Thailand, parasitic worm infections in children represent a significant public health issue, particularly prevalent in remote and less developed rural areas. This is largely attributed to the lack of understanding and awareness about infection prevention among children. Young children often play in environments such as soil and sand which harbor these parasites. Moreover, the lack of emphasis on hand hygiene before handling food increases the risk of infection. Commonly reported parasites in the southern region include hookworms, roundworms, threadworms, and horsehair worms, which can be transmitted through skin contact, contaminated fruits and vegetables, and poor hygiene practices. These infections often lead to malnutrition and anemia, especially in young children, stunting their physical and intellectual growth. It is imperative to foster good physical and mental hygiene to facilitate normal growth and to cultivate a high-quality future human resource for the country.

To address this issue, our project team has delivered an outreach programme series to prevent and control parasitic worm infections among young children in the local community, Tha Sala District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, which has been carried out continuously for the second year. Our mission is to foster good health and well-being outcomes in children through current collaborations with various health institutions including Walailak Community Demonstration Health Promotion Hospital, Walailak University Medical Center, local health units, and the 12 participating schools, involving over 500 participants aged between 6 and 12 years, including Lao and Burmese refugee children and children with autism. Initially, the survey of the prevalence and risk factors of intestinal parasite infection in children found that the prevalence of whipworm infection was still 5.2% and hookworm infection was 3.9%. Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that the factors significantly related to infection were religion, weight, behavior of not cutting nails, behavior of not washing vegetables thoroughly before eating, and behavior of not washing hands after eating. In addition, analysis of satellite images of each school showed that the infection of each type of parasite varied in area and this relationship

can be used to identify areas with a high chance of infection. The results of this project indicate that although the prevalence of intestinal parasite infection has decreased, behavioral and environmental factors are still risks. The volunteer students who opted to undergo diagnostic tests for parasitic infections will be informed about their health status. Those found infected will be treated with antiparasitic drugs and will receive continuous monitoring. The program also aims to educate the students, teachers, and all parents on how to protect themselves from key parasitic diseases in children. To ensure sustainable operations and development, our project collaborates with governmental agencies in setting SDG policy. We have established partnerships with five child development centers and seven primary schools, in addition to the Tambon Thai Buri Administrative Organization in Tha Sala District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province (all are the regional governments). Through a concerted effort, we aspire to forge a path toward sustained health and well-being for the children, laying a solid foundation for the country's future.