95 - INTESTINAL PARASITES AND SELF-MEDICATION IN THE VIEW OF THE PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

Intestinal parasites are a persistent public health problem in developing countries. In Brazil, this problem is more pronounced, since unfortunately there is no policy of profound and serious health education. These diseases are linked to socio-economic conditions, lack of basic sanitation, deficient body hygiene, and inadequate treatment of water for human consumption (Souza et al., 2002). Data from the World Health Organization indicate that there is a higher prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections in children due to their habits of maintaining contact with the ground and afterwards putting their hands in their mouths, or feeding themselves without washing their hands or food.

De Carli; Tasca (2001a and b) state that the diagnosis of intestinal parasites is performed by examining the feces; however, this is not always done to satisfaction, and to get rid of this malady, patients self-medicate, defined by Arrais et al. (1997) as a practice in which an individual uses drugs without a prescription, deciding which drug to use, replacing medical supervision with the prescription of medicines by unauthorized persons, such as friends, family, or the pharmacy or drugstore clerk.

Intestinal parasites are more prevalent in children, especially in children of preschool age, which can trigger gastrointestinal problems, structural growth retardation, and consequent poor school performance, physical and intellectual impairment, malnutrition, among others. Additionally, self-medication without a proven diagnosis of parasitic diseases can worsen the clinical picture of the child. Considering these features, this study aimed to identify the parents' perception of intestinal parasites and self-medication in preschool-aged children enrolled in a nursery in the city of Serra Grande, PB; to identify the socio-demographic profile of the parents of children in preschool; and to investigate the prevalence of self-medication in children with intestinal parasites from the parents' reports.

METHODS

Exploratory, descriptive field study with a quantitative and qualitative approach, conducted with 52 parents of children aged 2 to 6 years regularly enrolled in the Santa Luzia Municipal Nursery in the municipality of Serra Grande, PB. Data were collected by means of a

semi-structured questionnaire, and were then analyzed by simple statistical techniques and content analysis proposed by Bardin. During the study, all of the ethical requirements of Resolution 196/96 of the National Health Council, which deals with research involving human subjects were met, and only parents or guardians who agreed and signed the consent form participated in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the socio-demographic data of the sample, it was composed of 52 parents or guardians, with ages ranging from 18 to 67 years, with the predominant age being 28-32 years, accounting for 30.8%. The predominant gender was female, accounting for 90.4% of the participants. Regarding marital status, parents or guardians were married in 84.6% of the sample, 75% have a monthly income below the minimum wage, which interferes with the health conditions of children, by precluding the fostering of environments and practices that create a better quality of life. With respect to educational level, 50% of respondents were found have completed a primary education. Melo et al. (2004) state that the educational level of parents is an important aspect in studies in the area of maternal-child health, since it may be related to the degree of involvement that the mother and/or father has with their children's education, with their knowledge about health care and the mechanisms of disease prevention, as well as allowing for greater access to services and information.

In relation to household and hygienic habits, 92.3% of the sample was found to have running water, 69.2% said they treat the water before human consumption, while 30.8% use it without any prior treatment, 52% of the sample has sewage in their homes. As for the data regarding personal hygiene, 78.3% of participants have a bathroom at home. The non-availability of good quality water, poor disposal of waste, inadequate garbage, and the consequently polluted environment are some of the factors that contribute to the high incidence of parasitic diseases (ROUQUAYROL, 1999).

When interviewed about intestinal parasitic diseases, 96.2% of the sample was found to have information on their causes and symptoms. However, they did not develop satisfactory prevention practices and use non-prescription drug therapies to combat the symptoms. Of those interviewed, 34.1% of respondents claimed to know the main causes of parasitic diseases, while 73.1% of parents responded that their children have had some kind of intestinal parasites, of which 46.2% could not tell of what type, and 53.8% of parents or guardians make use of self-medication, as can be seen in the statements below:

> "I administer medicine without going through the doctor, for they are drugs that I have administered before." Int. 21
> "We think we know everything and buy the medication that we've already taken or think will do." Int. 01
> "I don't know much... I only use medication that I already know what it is for, because I've already taken it." Int. 05

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study reached the proposed objectives, since it was possible to understand the perception of the parents or guardians of preschool-aged children about intestinal parasites and self-medication. The results show that there is a significant

prevalence of intestinal parasites in children aged two to six years, as well as self-medication. The sanitary conditions of the houses, the people, and the environment to which children are subjected can contribute significantly to a higher prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections in this age group. Thus, the improvement of socioeconomic and health conditions are priorities in health promotion programs.

It is important to emphasize how important it is to promote educational activities that include the family, subsidizing health care so that self-medication is minimized in the family environment.

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INTESTINAL PARASITES AND SELF-MEDICATION IN THE VIEW OF THE PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

ABSTRACT

The intestinal parasitic infections are caused by human pathogens, especially in areas with precarious hygiene and health conditions. Its prevalence is higher among children due to their inadequate hygiene habits. This study aims to: identify the parents' perception of intestinal parasites and self-medication in children enrolled in a pre-school nursery in the city of Serra Grande, PB; to identify the socio-demographic profile of the parents of children in preschool; to investigate the prevalence of self-medication in children with intestinal parasites from the parents' reports. This is a descriptive study with a quantitative and qualitative approach, developed in the homes of parents or guardians who have children enrolled in that daycare. The sample consisted of 52 parents or guardians, data were collected through a questionnaire and analyzed in the light of relevant literature on the topic. The results show that 90.4% of respondents are female, 50% had completed elementary school. With regard to knowledge about intestinal parasites, 96.2% reported being familiar with them, while 73% said their children have been affected by these diseases. Regarding self-medication, 53.8% said they perform it on their children when they are sick; and of these, 35% and 34%, respectively say that they are self-motivated and self-medicate due to the convenience of knowing the indications of the drugs for parasitic diseases. It is worth noting that respondents have adequate knowledge regarding intestinal parasites; however, to minimize their problems, the vast majority performs self-medication, a habit that can lead to various health consequences of the individual, especially in children, who are more vulnerable, and there is therefore the need to invest in educational measures aimed at raising awareness and reducing this practice.

KEYWORDS: Self Medication. Preschool children. Parasitic Diseases.

ENTÉRO-PARASITOSES INTESTINALES ET AUTOMÉDICATION DANS LA PERSPECTIVE DE PARENTS D'ENFANTS EN ÂGE PRÉSCOLAIRE

RÉSUMÉ

Les entéro-parasitoses intestinales sont causées par des agents pathogènes humains, principalement dans des régions aux conditions d'hygiène et sanitaires précaires. Sa prépondérance est plus élevée chez les enfants du fait de leurs habitudes d'hygiène inadéquates. Cette étude a pour objectif : d'identifier la perception des parents au sujet des parasitoses intestinales et de l'automédication chez des enfants en âge préscolaire inscrits à la crèche de la ville de Serra Grande/PB ; d'identifier le profil sociodémographique des parents d'enfants en âge préscolaire. Étudier la prépondérance de l'automédication chez des enfants avec parasitoses intestinales à partir de la description des parents. Il s'agit d'une recherche descriptive avec un abordage quanti-qualitatif, développée dans les domiciles des parents ou responsables qui possèdent des enfants inscrits dans la crèche mentionnée. L'échantillon a été composé de 52 parents ou responsables, les données ont été collectées à travers l'application d'un questionnaire et analysées à la lumière de la littérature pertinente sur le thème. Les résultats ont montré que 90,4% des interviewés sont de sexe féminin, 50% ont étudié jusqu'à l'enseignement fondamental. Par rapport à la connaissance au sujet des parasitoses intestinales, 96,2% ont déclaré les connaître alors que 73% ont affirmé que leurs enfants ont déjà été touchés par ces maladies. En ce qui concerne l'automédication, 53,8% ont affirmé la pratiquer chez des enfants chaque fois qu'ils sont malades, parmi ceux-ci 35% et 34% respectivement affirment faire usage de cette pratique par motivation propre et par praticité de déjà connaître les médicaments indiqués pour les maladies parasitaires. Il reste à considérer que les interviewés possèdent des connaissances satisfaisantes par rapport aux parasitoses intestinales mais pour minimiser leurs problèmes, la grande majorité fait usage de l'automédication, une habitude qui peut engendrer diverses conséquences pour la santé de l'individu principalement chez les enfants qui sont plus vulnérables, étant donc nécessaire de s'investir dans des mesures éducatives pour la conscientisation et la diminution de cette pratique.

MOTS-CLÉS:Automédication. Enfants préscolaires. Maladies Parasitaires.

ENTEROPARASITOSIS INTESTINALES Y AUTOMEDICACIÓN SEGÚN LA PERSPECTIVA DE PADRES DE NIÑOS EN EDAD PREESCOLAR

RESUMEN

Las enteroparasitosis intestinales son causadas por patógenos humanos, principalmente en regiones con precariedad en las condiciones de higiene sanitaria. Su prevalencia es mayor entre niños, debido a sus hábitos inadecuados de

higiene. Este estudio tiene por objetivos: identificar la percepción de los padres acerca de las parasitosis intestinales y la automedicación en niños, en edad preescolar, matriculados en el jardín de infantes del Municipio de Serra Grande, Estado de Paraíba, Brasil; identificar el perfil sociodemográfico de los padres de niños en edad preescolar; investigar la prevalencia de la automedicación en niños, con parasitosis intestinales, a partir de los relatos hechos por los padres. Se trata de una investigación descriptiva, con enfoque cuanti-cualitativo, realizada en los domicilios de padres o responsables que tienen niños matriculados en el jardín de infantes mencionado. La muestra se compuso de 52 padres o responsables; los datos fueron recolectados mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario y se analizaron a la luz de la literatura pertinente al tema. Los resultados evidencian que 90,4% de los entrevistados son del sexo femenino, 50% estudiaron hasta terminar la enseñanza primaria. Con relación al conocimiento sobre las parasitosis intestinales, 96,2% relataron que las conocían, mientras que 73% afirmaron que sus niños ya fueron acometidos por tales enfermedades. En lo que se refiere a la automedicación, 53,8% afirmaron que la usan en sus niños, siempre que ellos están enfermos, de estos, 35% y 34%, respectivamente, afirmaron que utilizan esta práctica por motivación propia y por la practicidad de que ya conocen los medicamentos indicados para las enfermedades parasitarias. Corresponde considerar que los entrevistados tienen conocimientos satisfactorios en relación con las parasitosis intestinales, no obstante, para minimizar sus problemas, la gran mayoría usa la automedicación, hábito que puede ocasionar diversas consecuencias para la salud del individuo, principalmente en los niños quienes, a su vez, son más vulnerables, habiendo, por consiguiente, la necesidad de que se invierta en medidas educacionales con el objetivo de la concientización y la disminución de esta práctica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Automedicación. Niños preescolares. Enfermedades Parasitarias.

ENTEROPARASITOSES INTESTINAIS E AUTOMEDICAÇÃO NA PERSPECTIVA DE PAIS DE CRIANÇAS EM IDADE PRÉ-ESCOLAR

RESUMO

As enteroparasitoses intestinais são causadas por patógenos humanos, principalmente em regiões com precariedade nas condições de higiene-sanitária. Sua prevalência é maior entre crianças devido aos seus hábitos de higiene inadequados. Este estudo tem por objetivos: Identificar a percepção dos pais acerca das parasitoses intestinais e automedicação em crianças com idade pré-escolar matriculadas na creche do município de Serra Grande/PB; Identificar o perfil sócio-demográfico dos pais de crianças em idade pré-escolar. Investigar a prevalência da automedicação em crianças com parasitoses intestinais a partir do relato de pais. Trata-se de uma pesquisa descritiva com abordagem quanti-qualitativa, desenvolvida nos domicílios de pais ou responsáveis que possuem crianças matriculadas na referida Creche. A amostra foi composta por 52 pais ou responsáveis, os dados foram coletados através da aplicação de um questionário e analisados à luz da literatura pertinente a temática. Os resultados evidenciam que 90,4% dos entrevistados são do gênero feminino, 50% estudaram até o ensino fundamental. Com relação ao conhecimento sobre as parasitoses intestinais 96,2% relataram conhecê-las enquanto que 73,% afirmaram que suas crianças já foram acometidas por tais doenças. No tocante a automedicação 53,8% afirmou praticá-la em suas crianças sempre que elas estão doentes, destes, 35% e 34% respectivamente afirmam que fazem uso desta prática por motivação própria e pela praticidade de já conhecer os medicamentos indicados para as doenças parasitárias. Cabe considerar que os entrevistados possuem conhecimentos satisfatórios em relação às parasitoses intestinais, entretanto, para minimizar seus problemas, à grande maioria faz uso da automedicação, hábito que pode acarretar diversas conseqüências a saúde do indivíduo principalmente nas crianças que, por sua vez são mais vulneráveis, havendo, portanto, a necessidade de se investir em medidas educativas objetivando a conscientização e a diminuição desta prática.

PALAVRAS CHAVES: Automedicação. Crianças pré-escolares. Doenças Parasitárias.