

INTESTINAL PARASITIC INFECTIONS AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN PREK RUSSEY COMMUNE, CAMBODIA

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Objective Possible relationships were explored between socioeconomic status (SES) and intestinal parasitic infections among residents of Prek Russey, a commune in a rural area near Phnom Penh.

Methods An epidemiological study was conducted in Prek Russey Commune, consisting of the following three villages: Kroppeu Ha (KH), Prek Russey (PR), and Prek AngChanh (PA), with respective populations of 3,401, 1,350, and 1,044. Examinations of intestinal parasitic infections and the interview survey were performed.

Results Among the residents of KH, PR, and PA, respectively, the prevalence rates of three major species of parasites were as follows: 17%, 27%, and 34% had hookworm; 14%, 17%, and 19% had *Ascaris lumbricoides*; and 13%, 17%, and 18% had *Strongyloides stercoralis*. The prevalence of each parasitic group tended to increase in the order of KH, PR, and PA. The greatest differences between the villages were in the prevalence of hookworm infection. Our epidemiological survey revealed three SES-related factors whose proportions increased or decreased in the order of KH, PR, and PA. First, the percentages of households purchasing relatively safe drinking water were 96%, 63%, and 2%, respectively. Second, whereas 82% and 78% of houses in KH and PR were equipped with a latrine, only 41% of houses in PA were so equipped. Third, the proportion of households whose main income was from farming increased in the order of KH, PR, and PA.

Conclusion The present study thus suggests that greater latrine use and less dependence on farming activity are related to a lower prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections, although the results are not conclusive due to the ecological nature of the study.

Key words : socioeconomic status, intestinal parasitic infections, hookworm, *Strongyloides stercoralis*, *Ascaris lumbricoides*, Cambodia

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