

Schistosome parasite

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Schistosomes Parasite Schistosomiasis is a parasitic disease carried by a fresh water snail. The snail fever is prevalent in tropical and sub-tropical climates. The Schistosomiasis disease is also known as bilharzia or snail fever and infects over 240 million people in over 78 countries in the world. Although the disease is common in the world, it ranks second to malaria in the most prominent parasitic diseases in the world (WHO n. p). There are specific risk factors that put increases the infection rate of the illnesses. Specifically, these include being in contact with freshwater sources that are infected with the bilharzia diseases, being under the age of 14, residing in the prone regions such as Africa, and working in occupations centered around freshwater areas.

The transmission of the diseases occurs when an individual suffering from the disease contaminates fresh water sources with infected eggs that hatch in the water (WHO n. p). Upon infection, the worm develops into adult schistosomes that live in the blood vessel and lay eggs. The progenies are emitted, with the faeces and urine, to ensure the continuity of the life cycle. However, some eggs are trapped in the body tissues where they cause immune reaction and progress to damage the body organs.

There are various snail species responsible for the transmission of the disease and vary on the region. The most common vector species are *Bulinus*, *Biomphalaria*, *Oncomelania*, and *Physopsis* that are prevalent, in Africa, Asia, and Europe (WHO n. p). The disease has two broad classifications based on its area of infection. Specifically, intestinal and urogenital Schistosomiasis is prevalent in Africa and Asia. The ailment is common among the rural poor communities including women doing domestic chores such as washings and children living under unhygienic

condition with higher exposure to infected water.

The manifestation of the disease symptoms is due to the body's reaction to the worms eggs. The most common signs of the intestinal Schistosomiasis include abdominal pain, blood in the stool, and diarrhoea. However, the enlargement of the spleen and the liver is common in the advanced stages. Specifically, these enlargements are due to the accumulation of fluid in the peritoneal cavity and increased blood pressure in the abdominal vessels (WHO n. p). In the urogenital Schistosomiasis, the classic symptom is blood in urine (haematuria). In its advanced stage, bladder cancer, fibrosis of the ureter is common. Additionally, painful intercourse, lesions, and vaginal bleeding are typical symptoms in women. Symptoms in children include anaemia and deterred learning. When the disease reaches a chronic state, it causes death to the victim.

Prevention of the diseases has been successful for the last 40 years in countries such as China, Egypt, Brazil, and Cambodia. The primary preventive measures include improved sanitation, hygiene education, snail control, access to clean water, and treatment of the at-risk population. Treatment is another strategy utilized in preventing the spread of the disease. In most cases, medication target school-aged children, adults working under risky conditions, as well as communities in endemic regions (WHO n. p). Such measures aim at curbing the infection before it advances to severe or acute state. The recommended treatment for Bilharzia is praziquantel as it is safe, efficient, and cost-effective.

Works Cited

WHO. " WHO | Schistosomiasis." WHO | World Health Organization. World Health Organization, 2014. Web. 24 Mar. 2015. .
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