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**RISK FACTORS OF CHILDHOOD ACUTE RESPIRATORY TRACT
INFECTIONS (ARI) IN MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH (MOH) AREA
YATINUWARA**

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A community-based longitudinal study conducted in the Medical Officer of Health area Yatimuwara, in Kandy District, to investigate the symptoms of childhood acute respiratory tract infections (ARI) and their possible risk factors. A cohort of randomly selected 498 children between 1 to 5 years of age was followed up for a period of 01 year yielding 498 child-years of observation.

The overall incidence of ARI was 6.2 episodes per child-year observed. Running nose and cough comprised 94% of the episodes. In the study cohort, 338 children experienced 1934 episodes (5.7 episodes per child-year) of running nose, while 240 had 950 episodes (4 episodes per child-year) of cough attacks. On the other hand, 32 children had 107 episodes (3.3 episodes per child-year) of difficulty in breathing, and 04 had 12 episodes of ear discharges (3 episodes per child-year). Twenty-one (21) children experienced 66 episodes of sore throats, which calculated 3.1 episodes per child-year.

The analysis of the data by considering the first attack of ARI revealed that out of 498 children only 403 experienced ARIs. Among them 192 (47.6%) had running nose and fever, while 127 (31.5%) had running nose. There were 19 (4.7%) presented with cough, fever and difficulty in breathing and 13 (3.2%) with cough and difficulty in breathing. Fever with ear discharge was found in 13 (3.2%) children.

The risk factor analysis was done by using the multiple regression models. The results showed that the incidence of running nose was associated with the inadequate ventilation of the bedroom and the low birth weight, whereas the incidence of cough was associated with the low birth weight only. It further revealed that the mother's education was negatively associated with the difficulty in breathing among the study population. However, it was positively associated with the father's alcohol consumption. The regression analysis results revealed that the age of the child was positively associated with the incidence of the sore throats.

The study documented ARI to be a major cause of morbidity among children living in the MOH area Yatimuwara. Further, it identified inadequate ventilation of the bedroom, low birth weight, age and the mother's education as the important variables, determined the childhood ARI.