

A STUDY ON SHORT TERM RECALL MEMORY OF SCHOOL CHILDREN ON ZONOTIC DISEASES

S.J. WIJESINGHE,¹ A.DANGOLLA,¹ M. RUPASINGHE² AND G.I.S. PERERA¹

¹*Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science, ²Post graduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya*

In this project, our objectives were to disseminate knowledge on zoonoses via school children and to examine their ability to recall the salient information of lectures offered after a specified time period. Our team, organized lectures of 3-4 hr duration in schools, during which Leptospirosis, Tuberculosis, Rabies, Japanese encephalitis, Salmonellosis, Toxoplasmosis, Psitacosis, skin and worm infestations as zoonoses were discussed. We also highlighted some details on transmission of these conditions from respective hosts to man.

The lectures were conducted in sinhala with the aid of an overhead projector and multimedia projector. For each zoonotic condition, the causative organism involved, method of transmission, clinical signs in hosts, treatment and control measures were discussed. At the end of the 2 hours seminar, the school children were given a questionnaire which comprised of 15 multiple choice questions (closed ended). Seven questions were based on the general information and the others were based on subject matter discussed at the seminar. Students were unaware of the questionnaire at the beginning of the seminar. The students were asked to take the questionnaire home and answer. Responses were collected both by hand and by post.

The total number of students participated was 152 at 2 locations and 108 questionnaires (71%) were received after 2 weeks. During the first week, 74% responses were collected. All respondents were 11-20 years old, 35% males and 65% females. The highest educational qualification of the respondents was G.C.E.O/L (25% of respondents) and the others were below O/L standards. Approximately 41% of the participants have listened to similar lectures and at least 20% of the respondents knew about at least one disease condition before hand. Only 48% of the respondent answered that Rabies was the fatal disease that was taught. However, 85% of them knew correctly the disease that the pigs spread to man. Eighty five percent indicated correctly, the route of leptospirosis infection. Only 50% answered correctly as salmonellosis was the condition that spread through eggs. However, 99% recalled that any mammal can be infected with rabies, and a vast majority of responses were satisfactory on first aid after a stray dog bite. Students seem to have satisfactorily recalled about tuberculosis and the fact that man could be infected from elephants, since 85% of the responses were correct on this question. Approximately 80% could recall that Toxoplasma causes abortion. Unexpectedly, 45% of the respondents knew about psytacosis before our lecture and not about other conditions we taught.

Several factors such as the method of delivery, the lecturer, duration of the lecture and time duration given to respond will influence the post-term memory. Highly satisfactory response rates were observed for conditions with significant clinical signs or conditions of attractive host species such as elephants.