

Amoebic liver abscess: An emerging threat in northern Sri Lanka

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During the recent past, many cases of clinically diagnosed Amoebic Liver Abscess (ALA) patients were admitted to the Teaching Hospital Jaffna, Sri Lanka. With this background, a descriptive study, using an interviewer administered questionnaire was carried out to find out the risk factors of ALA among clinically and ultrasonologically confirmed patients with ALA. All the patients (110) admitted during the period from March to August 2011 were included in this study. Among them, 98% were male and half (50%) of them had only primary education. Majority (91%) were from urban area and 32% within the age group of 50-60. Eighty eight respondents (80%) earn low level of income and 72% were manual workers. Most of them (80%) obtained drinking water from unprotected well and 25% practiced open air defecation. Majority (97%) were alcoholic; among them 78% taking alcohol for more than 5 years, mainly "toddy" (69%) and (59%) consumes daily. Most of them (80%) drank "toddy" at "tavern" where 88% defecated after having "toddy" and among them 85% defecated in the open air. Ninety nine (83%) respondents stated that the utensils used in the "tavern" were not properly cleaned. Few (12%) had previous history of ALA and 17% could recall the past history that they had blood and mucous diarrhea. Based on chi-square test, sex, occupation, poor economic status, alcoholic habit, drinking "toddy", open air defecation at "tavern" and improper washing of utensils at "tavern" are the statistically significant (at p value < 0.05 level) risk factors of ALA. In conclusion, increasing the hygienic practices such as drinking water from protected wells, defecating in water sealed toilets especially at "tavern" and proper and frequent cleaning of utensils used at "tavern" combine with public awareness programs may reduce the future incidents of ALA in Jaffna.

EMBO Global Lecture Course and Symposium on
Amoebiasis: Exploring the biology and Pathogenesis of
Entamoeba.
March 4-7, 2012. Khajuraho, India.