

Use of an Anti-Helminth Tracking Card to Promote Adherence to Deworming Treatment in Rural Honduras

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Background: Soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections are prevalent in the developing world and are second only to malaria in terms of global morbidity. To reduce the burden in endemic regions, the WHO has recommended twice yearly anti-helminthic medication administration. Although Virginia Commonwealth University's Global Health & Health Disparities Program (GH2DP) has been supporting de-worming efforts in the region in and around La Hicaca in rural, remote Honduras since 2008, a relatively high prevalence of chronic STH infections persists in the region. The region served includes approximately 17 villages with 1,200 people; although the vast majority of people are impoverished some are more so than others. This study investigated the role of an Anti-Helminth Tracking Card (ATC) in promoting adherence.

Methods: ATCs were distributed to patients attending GH2DP clinics in June 2015. Subsequently, a six-item questionnaire was administered to eligible patients who presented to GH2DP clinics in June 2016. The survey assessed demographics, use and knowledge of the ATC, and frequency of deworming treatment.

Findings: Of the 176 surveys collected, 51% had received an ATC with 56% of those patients returning with the card and 98% correctly identifying its purpose. The majority of those patients were from the poorest areas ($p=0.0001$) as compared to other villages. For all patients, 45% had undergone deworming treatment in the prior year with only 25 patients receiving the recommended two treatments. Interestingly, all of these patients had received an ATC. For patients that did not have an ATC, 99% had not received any treatment. Overall, the majority of patients, regardless of ATC, did not know what the recommended frequency of treatment should be.

Interpretation: The study promisingly suggests that the ATC is a reasonable tool to be implemented in resource-scarce areas to increase adherence with recommended deworming therapy guidelines. Our results will be used to inform anti-STH efforts in the region.

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