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Preventing enteric fevers in London VFR travellers

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**Background:** Enteric fevers have recently increased in the UK; 40% of the 288 cases in 2007 were in London. South West London Health Protection Unit saw a doubling of enteric fever cases from 2007 (n = 16) to 2008 (n = 32). An initiative has been launched in south west London to provide pre-travel health promotion, particularly for travellers visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnicity in whom the majority of UK enteric fever cases occur. An enhanced surveillance questionnaire revealed many VFRs do not seek pre-travel health advice, particularly not from expected sources such as general practitioners or travel clinics. Enteric fever health promotion needs to be targeted at London’s VFR travellers and Asian communities.

**Methods:** We present 4 approaches to improving enteric fever health promotion. Using feedback from an enhanced surveillance questionnaire we have developed a travel health information leaflet containing typhoid/paratyphoid prevention advice aimed at VFRs. The leaflet is the first of its kind in the UK, giving food, water, hygiene and immunization advice. We performed two qualitative surveys: i) a targeted reader’s group (n = 15) to ascertain the accessibility and appropriateness of the leaflet to our target population; ii) in a sample of VFR and Asian Londoners we conducted a focus group (n = 8) to identify the perceived barriers to accessing travel health information, and more suitable settings for travel health promotion in this population. All work was performed in collaboration with Leicester NHS, and the Health Protection Agency’s Communications and Travel & Migrant Health Sections.

**Results:** Of 30 cases of enteric fever in south west London in 2008, 53% were typhoid, 70% were VFR travellers, and 67% were of Asian ethnicity. Content and style of the typhoid travel health promotion leaflet was found to be accessible to our target audience; concern was raised over potentially inaccessible use of language specific to typhoid and faeces. Perceived barriers included cultural views and notions of the purpose of travel. More appropriate settings for dissemination would include community pharmacies, school nurses and community centres.

**Conclusion:** We have developed an appropriate, innovative travel health promotion leaflet aimed at preventing typhoid/paratyphoid in London VFR travellers which is additionally tailored toward the Asian community.

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International traveler and prevention of diarrheal diseases characterization of the international traveller to whom has been prescribed cholera vaccine at the international vaccination center of Oporto during the years 2007 and 2008

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**Background:** Each year more than 50 million people travel from industrialized countries to developing countries. The most common health problem in people who travel to these countries is diarrheal diseases, an important cause of morbidity and mortality. The recent commercialization of a new recombinant vaccine of cholera (the most severe enterotoxigenic enteropathy) has created new expectations in the protection of travelers. An additional advantage of this vaccine is its ability to induce a protective immune response against labile toxin of enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (the most frequent cause of traveler’s diarrheas). The aim of this study was the determination of prescription rate of cholera vaccine, the period of the year when there were a higher number of prescriptions and the characterization of the international traveler regarding the gender, age, occupation, residence, travel destination, time spent at destination, type of accommodation. In a second phase will be assessed the vaccine efficacy.

**Methods:** Descriptive, quantitative and retrospective study. The sample was the population of Travel Consultation of the International Vaccination Center of Oporto, who has been prescribed cholera vaccine during the years 2007 and 2008. The records of the Center’s archive were consulted and Microsoft Office Excel® 2007 was used for data processing.

**Results:** The prescription percentage of cholera vaccine was 6.4%. The great number of prescriptions occured at 1st trimester of 2007 and 2nd and 3rd trimesters of 2008. Males are the one that prevails in travellers (82%). Most travelers (79%) belong to the age group of 21-50 years. The construction, technical occupations and occupations related to administration includes the majority of travelers. The most common destination is Angola (88%) and in most cases users on business trips (78%). Most users stay in hotel (31%), although a significant proportion also stay with relatives (29%) or on company premises (27%). Most travelers (92%) remains for over a week.

**Conclusion:** The proposed objectives were achieved and the results were consistent with health professional’s typical traveller perception - male, working-age, Oporto resident, construction worker, which travels to Angola for professional reasons, staying in hotels or in relatives or business houses, for more than a week.

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