

ABSTRACT

A follow up of health problems identified at school medical examinations in the year 2001 in MOH area Ella was carried out during this study.

Students who were studying in grades 1, 4 and 7 during the year 2001 in all 28 schools and who were screened during school medical examinations were taken as the study population. The study sample was chosen by selecting half of the schools by simple random sampling.

Secondary data from the student's health records (H 457) which were used during the SMII, were used in identifying the detected defects and the students referred to dental clinics and specialized hospital clinics. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to gather further information of the referred students from the parents. At the same time views of school teachers on the school health programme was obtained using a self administered questionnaire.

On analysis of data, dental caries (43.4%), acute malnutrition (19.5%) chronic malnutrition (20%) and Pediculosis(10%) was found to be the most common defects detected among the students. Of the students referred to specialized clinics 69.31% were due to poor visual acuity detected at SMI.

With regard to parental awareness of school health programmes, majority of the parents (90%) had heard of them but awareness of the activities carried out at SMI was poor especially among the parents of Tamil medium students.

On average only 63% of the parents knew that defects were detected in their children who needed referral treatment, which shows that there is very poor communication between the parents and the school staff.

With regard to the compliance of attending the referral centres, only 60% of the students who were given referral cards were taken to the respective clinics. Not understanding what was written in the card and where to take the child and not knowing that the child had a defect needing medical treatment were the main reasons given by those with poor compliance. This indicates the grossly unsatisfactory state of the existing system in following up the referrals and poor monitoring and supervision by the relevant authorities regarding this matter.

The class teachers expressed a positive attitude towards school health programmes. Lack of coordination between the health and the school staff in organising school health programmes, poor participation by parents and a lack of a proper referral follow up system were identified as the major shortcomings. The teachers also agreed that they could actively be involved in improving the compliance of the referrals.