

ABSTRACT: DR. SIMON MUHUMUZA

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVED UPTAKE OF PREVENTIVE TREATMENT FOR INTESTINAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS AMONG CHILDREN IN JINJA DISTRICT, UGANDA

Introduction: In Jinja district, the Schistosomiasis Control Program (SCP) provides regular health education and free annual praziquantel to school aged-children and adults at risk of the infection. However, uptake of preventive treatment for *S. mansoni* is low - 42% and the prevalence of the infection in the district is high - 65%.

Objective: The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative interventions for improving uptake of preventive treatment for intestinal schistosomiasis in Jinja district, Uganda with an overall aim of improving strategies for morbidity control.

Methods: The study will be done in 3 phases: Phase I (baseline); the prevalence and intensity of *S. mansoni* infection and the factors influencing uptake will be determined through a cross sectional cluster survey involving 540 primary school children in 10 selected schools in Jinja district. Phase II (intervention phase); through a cluster randomized trial, the 10 primary schools will be randomized to either receive specific messages for schistosomiasis control and prevention alone (referred to as IEC group) or in combination with a pre-treatment snack in the morning of each mass drug distribution day (referred to as the snack group). Phase III (evaluation phase); 450 primary school children will be studied to determine the effectiveness of the intervention; Proportions of uptake and prevalence and intensity of *S. mansoni* infection among primary school children in the IEC group and the snack group will be compared for statistical significance using appropriate statistical methods.

It is anticipated that the measures for improved uptake of preventive treatment for intestinal schistosomiasis evaluated in this study will influence practice and policy of controlling intestinal schistosomiasis and may be integrated into the mass treatment programs at all levels.