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Chinese 中文
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Theme Areas

Publications

Policy Impact

Multimedia

Publications



Soil-Transmitted Helminth Infections and Correlated Risk Factors in Preschool and School-aged Children in Rural Southwest China

Journal Article

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We conducted a survey of 1707 children in 141 impoverished rural areas of Guizhou and Sichuan Provinces in Southwest China. Kato-Katz smear testing of stool samples elucidated the prevalence of ascariasis, trichuriasis and hookworm infections in pre-school and school aged children. Demographic, hygiene, household and anthropometric data were collected to better understand risks for infection in this population. 21.2 percent of pre-school children and 22.9 percent of school aged children were infected with at least one of the three types of STH. In Guizhou, 33.9 percent of pre-school children were infected, as were 40.1 percent of school aged children. In Sichuan, these numbers were 9.7 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively. Number of siblings, maternal education, consumption of uncooked meat, consumption of unboiled water, and livestock ownership all correlated significantly with STH infection. Through decomposition analysis, we determined that these correlates made up 26.7 percent of the difference in STH infection between the two provinces. Multivariate analysis showed that STH infection is associated with significantly lower weight-for-age and height-for-age z-scores; moreover, older children infected with STHs lag further behind on the international growth scales than younger children.

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