

Role of MRI in Polio eradication

Outbreaks of Polio have been reported from time to time. In 1980's more than 350 000 Polio cases were reported from more than 125 countries.

During the World Health Assembly held in 1988, a resolution was taken to eradicate Polio by year 2000. Member countries of the World Health Assembly including Sri Lanka were committed **to eradicate the polio from the world**. World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1989. Two main strategies adopted to eradicate Polio from world were the adequate Polio vaccine coverage of children and surveillance of Polio.

Last case of Polio in Sri Lanka was detected in 1993. As India is still having Polio, South East Asian region of WHO is not certified as Polio free.

Because of the constant danger of importation of Polio virus to the country, it is very important to maintain a high vaccine coverage and a very sensitive surveillance program. Polio Laboratory at the Medical Research Institute together with the Epidemiology unit maintains surveillance activity.

Polio laboratory at Medical Research Institute (MRI) started in 1968 at Colombo South Teaching Hospital. It was relocated to the newly built laboratory complex of MRI in 1990. It was recognized as the Polio Regional Reference Laboratory (Polio RRL) in 1991 by the Polio Eradication Initiative.

Polio virus is isolated from the stool samples collected from patients with acute flaccid paralysis. Once the virus is isolated it is identified by a number of specialized tests including real time PCR assay. Isolation results are sent to the clinicians. It is also sent to the Epidemiology unit to implement necessary control activities. Weekly compiled data is sent to the Regional Polio Program which monitors the Polio situation in the region.

Quality Assurance program is in place to maintain the standard of the Polio RRL. It is assessed and accredited annually by the WHO.

Polio RRL, Medical Research Institute is committed for a **“polio free world”**.