

## **Are Parasites going to invade us?**

The Medical Research Institute consists the only Parasitology laboratory which belongs to the Ministry of health and Nutrition in Sri Lanka. Therefore an unidentified or rarely found parasite from any hospital in the country is directed to the Dept. of Parasitology, MRI for further investigations. Patients suspected of suffering from any uncommon parasitic infections are sent here for diagnosis and management. Other than that various hospitals and other institutes consult us regarding advice on parasitic infections.

During the recent past we were able to identify about 6 parasites for the first time in Sri Lanka causing disease in Sri Lankan patients. Other than that we have identified 8 rare parasitic species from humans and where necessary we have given appropriate anti parasitic drugs to evacuate these parasites from the intestines.

We have done special investigations on parasitic diseases. Among them one important disease is toxoplasmosis. If a pregnant mother acquires this infection during pregnancy it can cause abortions, still births, hydrocephaly, microcephaly etc. We, the dept. of Parasitology organized several programs and workshops to educate people and also the doctors on toxoplasmosis.

In 2001, the specific anti Toxoplasma drugs were brought to Sri Lanka on our request. For the first time in Sri Lanka a clinic to treat patients suffering from toxoplasmosis was conducted at the dept. of Parasitology, MRI. Among the patients whom we treated there were patients who were at the verge of death at government hospitals as well as private hospitals. We were able to save their lives and send them home.

Due to the time constrain we are bound to speak only about few parasites and patients today. Nevertheless if you are interested to see the cases I have mentioned above, you can contact us and visit the department of Parasitology.

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