

GROWTH, NUTRITIONAL STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT IN INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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BACKGROUND

Children in institutions are at high risk of development delays and growth impairment.

OBJECTIVE

To assess growth, nutrition, development, immunisation status and socioeconomic background of institutionalised children in Colombo District.

DESIGN, SETTING AND METHOD

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted in Registered Voluntary Children's Homes in Colombo District. Two hundred and twenty three children of less than five years of age were studied. Children in whom the date of birth couldn't be obtained from either the birth certificate or the Child Health Developmental record were excluded from the study.

Anthropometric measurements were obtained by using standard techniques. Development of the children was assessed by using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Immunisation status of the child was documented using the Child Health Developmental Record. Details regarding the socio economic background were obtained by interviewing the person in charge of the institution. Permission was obtained from the Commissioner of Department of Probation and Child Care Services.

RESULTS

57.3 % were girls and 42.7 % were boys. 20.9 % and 14.8% girls and 30.2 % and 10.7% boys had moderate and severe stunting respectively. 27.1 % and 19.7% girls and 26.7 % and 21.4% boys had moderate and severe wasting respectively. Acute severe malnutrition was present in 6.8% of girls and 7.8 % of boys.

Gross motor delay was present in 23% whilst 38.7% had delays in fine motor development. Language acquisition was delayed in 32.5% of children and 28.1% had delays in personal and social skills. Almost 99.6% of children were age appropriately immunised. The major causes for institutionalisation of children were disability of the child, single mother, psychiatric illness of the mother and addiction to recreational drugs of the mother.

CONCLUSIONS

Institutionalised children in the Colombo District have a significant growth, nutrition and development impairment.