**PP 2: Animal bites in children: reasons for delay in seeking medical help**

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Objective: To describe the clinical characteristics of animal bites in children and to determine the reasons for delay in seeking medical help

Design, setting and methods: A descriptive study was conducted at the North Colombo Teaching Hospital in 2007. Consecutive children admitted following animal bites were recruited into the study until a sample of 100 was achieved. Children with snake and insect bites were excluded from the study. Data on clinical characteristics and treatment were obtained using an interviewer schedule.

Results: Sixty-five (65%) subjects were males. Mean age of children was 6.8(SD=3.2) years. Majority (88%) of bites were by dogs while cats, rats, monkeys and squirrels were responsible for the others. 68% of animals (67% of dogs) were domestic animals but only 14% were vaccinated. None of the domestic cats or squirrels was vaccinated. 72% were provoked bites and 81% had major exposures. Face, hands and fingers were the commonest places of bites. Following the bite 89% had washed the bite-site with soap and water and 6% had used antiseptics for cleaning. 75% came to the hospital within 24-hours while 16% presented after 72 hours. Commonest reason for delay was ignorance. There was no significant association between the delay in presentation and age or sex of the child, maternal educational level, number of children in the family, distance to the hospital, type of animal or the degree of exposure.

Conclusion: Eighty-six percent of animal bites in children were by unvaccinated animals. One-fourth of children were brought to the hospital after 24 hours and the commonest reason for delay was ignorance.