

Infestation rate of lice in patients in a mental hospital, Seoul, Korea

Sun Huh^{1)*}, Jina Kook²⁾, Jong-Yil Chai²⁾, Ki-Soo Pai³⁾

Depart of Parastiology¹⁾, College of Medicine, Hallym University, Chunchon 200-702, Department of Parasitology²⁾, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul 110-799 and Department of Pediatrics³⁾, College of Medicine, Ajou University, Suwon 442-749, Korea

Abstract: We examined the infestation rate of head and/or body lice in patients in a mental hospital, Seoul, Korea on June 27-28, 1988. Of 438 women, 146 (33.3%) were positive with nits or worms of louse. Of 143 men, 22 (15.4%) were positive with those of louse. Regular control programs were necessary to this hospital.

Key words: Louse, epidemiology, mental hospital, Korea

Louse infestation had been prevalent not only in school children, but also in persons in mental hospitals or in orphanage in Korea (Pai *et al.*, 1989; Pai, 1992; Ree *et al.*, 1992; Huh *et al.*, 1993). In late-June, 1988, a physician of a mental hospital asked us if we could examine and control louse infestation in his hospital in Seoul, Korea. We visited the hospital on June 27 and 28, 1988 and examined the patients for louse infestation in six woman's and two man's wards, where the head and/or body louse was known to be prevalent. The patients' age were all over 17. We examined hairs or body surfaces of each patient by naked eyes for the presence of nits or worms (adults and nymphs) of lice. We also asked the patients whether they saw the body louse and confirmed the body louse from seams of wears. At this survey, we regarded the louse found from the seams of wears or body surface as body lice, and from hair as head lice. Infested persons were treated with 0.1% permethrin shampoo without the follow-up examination.

Total number of patients examined was 581. Of 438 women, 146 (32.4%) were infested with

nits or worms of lice. In 21 infested women, the lice were found both hairs and body surfaces. In seven positive women the lice were seen not from the hair but from the body surface. Of 143 men, 22 (15.4%) were infested: Two were infested only with nits or adults of head lice, 17 were infested with worms of body louse, and three were infested with both body and head lice. We could find lice from body surface of women. However, they did not look body louse, but they were believed to migrate from the hair due to over-crowding. Although, lice were found only on the body not in hairs from seven women, it was probably due to that they were transmitted directly from neighbours or that there was a miss-detection of lice in hairs. At the same hospital, results of mass delousing effect with bioallethrin in August and September, 1991 was reported. From those data, we could see the endemicity of head louse infestation had persisted till 1991 when the prevalence rate of head louse in a woman's ward was 70.0% (Pai, 1992). Why did this endemicity continue in this hospital? It should be considered that there was a ward for admission of vagrants supported by the municipal city hall. There was a continuous entrance and exit of the persons. Therefore,

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* Corresponding author

although we controlled it at a certain point, new comers could bring lice again and again. Of 143 infested women, 47 (33.1%) were worm positive, and 95 (66.9%) were only nit positive. It meant that there was active transmission in this group. The percentage of presence of worm from positive subjects in a group might anticipate the future status of the infestation (Huh *et al.*, 1993). Only intensive and regular eradication program with mass chemotherapy can control this infestation.

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=국문초록=

서울소재 한 정신병원 환자의 이 감염 상황

한림대학교 의과대학 기생충학교실¹⁾, 서울대학교 의과대학 기생충학교실²⁾, 아주대학교 의과대학 소아과학교실³⁾

허선¹⁾, 국진아²⁾, 채종일²⁾, 배기수³⁾

서울 소재 한 정신병원에서 이가 유행한다며, 관리를 요청받아 1988년 6월 27, 28 이틀간 이 병원을 방문하여 환자들의 이 감염 여부를 조사하였다. 입원환자들의 일부인 대상자는 8개의 병동에 있었으며 모두 17세 이상이었다. 남자 143명 가운데 22명, 여자 438명 가운데 142명이 이에 감염되어 있었다. 이에 감염된 여자 142명 가운데 47명(33.1%)에서 총체가 발견되어 이 집단에서 매우 활발한 전파가 일어나고 있었음을 알 수 있었다. 이 병원에는 행려자들의 수용병동이 있어서, 새로 입원하는 사람들이 감염원이 되기에 계속 정기 검사와 화학요법을 통하여 관리하여야 이 퇴치가 가능할 것이다.

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