Is intestinal parasitic infection still a public health concern among Saudi children?

To the Editor

I read the interesting article by Al-Braiken FA[1] entitled: Is intestinal parasitic infection still a public health concern among Saudi children? I am surprised to know that intestinal parasitic infection is still prevailing among Saudi children despite the enormous improvement in living conditions and sanitary measures. It is well known that screening for a variety of health problems is contemplated in many parts of the world as it has proved helpful in elucidating potential cases so that early health interventions is necessary. The author stated that the overall prevalence of intestinal parasitic infection among studied Saudi children with gastroenteritis was 33.8% and that *Blastocystis hominis*, *Entamoeba histolytica*, and *Giardia lamblia*, were the leading enteric parasites encountered in the study. I really have no recent idea of the exact prevalence of parasites in asymptomatic Saudi children, and I wonder whether the author has any figure. The old reported studies gave a prevalence of 18-24%.[2-6] Nevertheless, I presume the figure in the current time is substantial. The World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines favor routine screening and treatment of parasitic infections of school-age children when the prevalence of parasitic infections in a community exceeds 50%.[7] This raises the question on the justification of routine screening of stool for intestinal parasites in Saudi children as a tool of public health measures on the basis of potential noticeable increase in the prevalence of this infection over the antecedent period. Simultaneously, the paramount importance of properly treating index cases, and continuing public health measures including public awareness of these potential parasites must not be undervalued. Both options are solicited to decrease the health burden of this infection in the long-term.

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No reply from the Author

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