

Role of little doctors in improving health and nutritional status among children in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Improved health and nutrition of children has a positive impact on his or her education and community development. Healthy and well-nourished children stay in school longer than malnourished children; they learn more and become healthier and more productive adults. In Bangladesh, both malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies remain significant problems that limit children's potential to succeed in school. Among school-aged children, 32% are stunted, 70% are underweight, 13% are wasted 55% are anemic and 34% have iodine deficiency. This innovative program selects five student from each class of third, fourth and fifth grade a total fifteen in number to as "Little Doctors." They assist their teachers on health promotion days and help their classmates learn about STH and how to prevent infection. They also distribute deworming tablet among non-school children on de-worming days Bangladesh government introduced "Little Doctors" concept in 2010 to control soil-transmitted helminthes (STH) when STH infection rate among school children peaked at 80%.

The current objectives of "Little Doctors" are to increase the status of health, hygiene, and nutrition among school students as well as their families. According to government guidelines, there are 15-21 members of the "Little Doctors" in each primary school. A Hygiene teacher leads this team. "Little Doctors" program is design to prevent and treat the causes of ill health that affect children's ability to learn, while creating a safe and supportive school environment that promotes healthy behaviors. Simple interventions such as regular deworming, micronutrient supplementation and hand washing with soap can prevent children to be anemic, and can prevent diarrheal diseases and pneumonia. Promoting healthy behaviors through school, is a very effective way of improving the health of the entire community today and in the future, as these children become parents themselves.

In the school, there is a Hygiene Corner for "Little Doctors" equipped with weighing scale, height board, eye chart, hand washing and poster with nutritional messages, emergency primary medical equipment boxes etc. to measure monthly height, weight and eye check-up and demonstration of hand washing and counselling. Here the members of the "Little Doctors" deliver health-related messages and play a role in health care. "Little Doctors" has already proved a cost effective and successful program which is to be scaled up in the country.

Biography:

Dr. Md. Khalilur Rahman has completed his MBBS from Rajshahi University. He also completed Master's in Public Health from North South University. Now he is working at Bangladesh National Nutrition Council as Director General. Formerly he performed his responsibility as Director, Hospital Services at DGHS and Director of Institute of Public Health Nutrition. By the position he has published more than 5 papers in reputed journals and has been serving as an editorial board member of repute.



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