

adolescents but is rather cumbersome to calculate(5).

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Xerophthalmia Prevalence in ICDS Area in Tamil Nadu

A sample survey was undertaken in the ICDS project in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, an industrial town with mixed socio economic population to detect the prevalence of xerophthalmia. One thousand children from 33 Anganwadi Centers (483 boys and 517 girls) were randomly selected and examined. Xerophthalmia was found in 206 (20.6%). Among them, 113 were males and 93 were females. With respect to staging, X_N was seen in 4 (0.4%), X_{1A} in 167 (16.7%), X_{1B} in 32 (3.2%) and X_{3A} in 3 (0.3%). The peak prevalence was seen in children between 3-5 years of age but xerophthalmia was also documented in 8 (0.8%) infants.

The ocular findings were more frequent in the poor socio economic group.

The prevalence of xerophthalmia in this ICDS area was high and far beyond the WHO prevalence criteria for determining the public health significance. The prevalence is also higher than an earlier report from rural Tamil Nadu(1). It is obvious that urgent action is necessary to reduce this micronutrient deficiency.

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