

## A study on health profile of pre-school children of Khagaria district of Bihar

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■ **ABSTRACT :** To study the health profile of pre-school children, the present investigation was planned and carried out. A sample of 100 pre-school children of Pansalwa village of Beldour block of Khagaria district of Bihar was selected at random. Findings of the study clearly revealed that a majority of the mothers (53%) were not washing their hands before feeding their child as well as 86 per cent of the children's hands, too were not washed before eating. Breast feeding was observed as 81 per cent and only 8 per cent of the children were exclusively top-fed. Weaning- age of the child on an average was found to be 18 months. Immunization coverage of the children was very low (56%) and Helminthic infestations were also observed among 32 per cent of the children. Morbidity profile of the children clearly revealed that 50 per cent of the children were victims of upper respiratory tract infections followed by incidence of diarrhoea (44%). Conclusively, health profile of children was observed to be abysmally poor.

■ **KEY WORDS :** Pre-school children, Health profile, Immunization, Morbidity, Infant feeding practices

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Pre-school children (1-6 years) undoubtedly are the most crucial segment of our population, due to not only to their sheer numbers, but also because during these formative years, foundations are laid for adult life. Today's child is the nation's future economic asset. The quality of our future human resources is going to be determined largely by the investment made now for the sound development of the child population (Gopalan, 1993).

India has the highest child population in the world, and children in 0 – 6 years age group number around 158 million (census of India, 2001). In the country, the highest percentage of child population was found in Bihar (40.8%) and Uttar Pradesh (40.1%). Nearly two out of three pre-school children in India are malnourished (Shrilakshmi, 2000). For a healthy working population, it is essential that children must have a sound health profile which is possible only when they will receive adequate nutrition to ensure proper physical and mental growth.

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Mal nutrition invariably is an outcome of poor health status of the children. Health profile is a composite term comprised mainly of dietary information pertaining to the child, infant feeding practices, weaning practices, immunization status and morbidity profile of the child.

A mother is the principal provider of primary care that the child needs during the first six years of life. The type of care, she provides, depends to a large extent on her knowledge and understanding of some aspect of basic nutrition and health care (Gaisie, 1969).