

3ie-IFPRI Seminar

Reducing Early Childhood Diarrhea by Enhancing Own-learning

December 11, 2014

[Agha Ali Akram](#), a post-doctoral researcher at Evidence Action, presented his paper “Reducing Early Childhood Diarrhea by Enhancing Own-learning” at the [3ie-IFPRI joint seminar series](#) in Washington D.C. on December 11th. Akram’s paper evaluates the impact of providing a simple Info-Tool that tracks the efficacy of chlorine tablets on chlorine uptake and usage for Pakistani households with young children.

The study sample consisted of 265 households in a fishing village near Karachi, Pakistan. The households were randomized into a control and treatment group and the study was rolled out in three phases. The treatment group was given an Info-Tool, which allows households to 1) measure incidents of diarrhea in a given week, and 2) measure the efficacy of the chlorine tablets in reducing incidents of diarrhea over time. Treatment households were also provided information on the monthly community average for diarrhea incidence in the area as a reference point. The outcomes of interest included the uptake of chlorine tablets, weekly chlorine usage, measures of child health, and incidents of under-5 diarrhea.

The paper finds a significant impact of providing an Info-Tool on the uptake and usage of chlorine tablets, and measures of child health. The treatment group were almost twice as likely to accept chlorine tablets as the control group at 57 weeks after the intervention’s initiation. Preliminary data from the endline survey suggests that the intervention had the greatest impact on the health of children 0 to 1 year old. Surprisingly, the treatment group unexpectedly reported higher levels of diarrhea throughout the intervention. However, the presenter argued that this may be due to a shift in the treatment group’s perceptions on measuring this issue.

Claire Chase, an Economist in the Water and Sanitation program at the World Bank, served as discussant. Chase commended Akram on his novel research on how best to improve the adoption of simple technologies. Chase remarked that this study helps us to better think of uptake as a main outcome, instead of as a means to an end. Audience comments and questions revolved around the use of the diarrhea average chart and target levels, and how to improve data collection for diarrhea incidence moving forward.

This summary was prepared by Kara Ingraham.