

**A project to determine the prevalence of Soil Transmitted Intestinal Infections (Soil Transmitted Helminthiasis / STH) in children ages 6 to 18 years in a rural community in Southern Alabama**

To be conducted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and supported by Community Partners, local and state Health Departments and local and state government.

**Reason for the project:**

STH infections used to be common throughout the Southeastern United States, but there have been no large studies conducted since the late 1950's. Some recent investigations have raised the concerns that these infections maybe ongoing. There have been several assessments documenting the problem of inadequate and failing sewage management throughout rural communities in southern Alabama which potentially could put residents at risk for these infections. Up-to-date and comprehensive information is urgently needed to address this concern.

**What are STH?**

STH or Soil Transmitted Helminths are intestinal parasites that are transmitted through sewage contamination of the ground / environment and infect humans. Common names for these infections include hookworm, roundworm and whipworm. These infections largely remain unrecognized due to limited symptoms, but long-standing and heavy infections can lead to poor health effects including anemia, protein loss, tiredness and poor concentration. Children are most at risk for both getting the infection and developing poor health effects from the infection. The best way to diagnose the infection is to examine a sample of stool (poop) under a microscope. It may take up to 3 separate samples collected on separate days to find the infection. The infection is easily treated with a safe medicine called Albendazole, which is taken as a single dose.

**Scope of the project:**

Doctors and nurses from UAB plan to enroll up to 600 children between the ages of 6 to 18 years who live in Wilcox or Lowndes Counties. Enrollment will begin in September 2019 and continue until the end of June 2020. Participation will involve completion of a short questionnaire, a finger-prick blood sample and the submission of 3 separate stool (poop) samples collected on separate days.

Doctors and nurses will be located at several locations throughout the community on different days from September 2019 through June 2020, to provide opportunities for enrollment. On enrollment a debit card will be mailed to the child's home. Once the stool samples are collected, money will be electronically transferred to the card. Each participant will be paid a stipend for collection of all 3 stool samples. The child will be provided with 3 containers in which to stool into. The container fits neatly into a toilet bowl, and has a collection bucket that detaches and can be sealed with a lid. The stool sample will need to be delivered to the John Paul Jones Hospital within 12 hours of being passed for processing. Study staff will be available to facilitate collection of these samples.

If a child is diagnosed with an infection, doctors and nurses from UAB will provide treatment at no charge to the family.

**For more information, please call 1-877-975-7280 (Dr. Poole) or 205-354-8660 (Ms. Janice Robinson)**