THE END OF THE GUINEA WORM?

Only 2 confirmed cases of Guinea worm disease in 2016

Guinea worm disease is poised to become the second human disease to be eradicated (after smallpox). In the 1980s, there were millions of cases of Guinea worm disease each year and the number has plummeted to only two confirmed cases so far in 2016, both believed to have been contained before the disease had a chance to spread. This accomplishment is particularly impressive considering that there is no cure or vaccine for Guinea worm disease. In fact, the most effective “cure” for the disease used today is the same one that has been used for thousands of years - to wrap the worm around a stick and slowly pull it.

"Guinea worm has no cure. So everything was about getting people to change their behavior. Getting people to do the right things."
- David Agyemang, who has worked with Ghana’s national Guinea worm eradication program

Process Map of the Guinea Worm Lifecycle

Solutions

1. Education: Once people understood how the parasite lifecycle and how the Guinea worm disease spread they could effectively work to prevent infections.

2. Keep infected people out of water supply: If infected people do not put blisters into water that is used for drinking, the lifecycle is broken. In order to accomplish this, some communities posted guards at watering holds and created new laws and fines.

3. Clean drinking water: Some aid organization helped provide access to clean drinking water or straws with filters that removed water fleas and prevented Guinea worm infections.

4. Larvicide: Some communities have killed the Guinea worm larva by treating the water with larvicide.

Investigate Problems. Prevent Problems.
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