

## Threat of Dengue: insider's and outsider's view

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Dengue infection has widely spread in South and East Asia during last few decades and local and international institutions have paid a close attention to identify preventive measures. In Sri Lanka, there are few evidences in dengue infection since 1965-66. However, it has become a major threat to public health in many urban and sub-urban areas of the country since 1989. After the recent development it has infected large number of people and also it has occurred frequently.

It is a fact that many researchers are doing their research as outsiders to the target group or to the community. Especially, it is very difficult to get insider's experience in the fields of social sciences. This is a case that a sociologist who has experienced dengue infection as an insider as well as outsider. He has been working in a WHO research team identifying the nature, how it spreads, its causes, and means of controlling dengue in Gampaha district, Sri Lanka since 2007. Therefore, he had undergone thorough training on the subject of dengue epidemic, and conducted research consulting the community and key-informants. The entire experience that he gained is as an outsider.

Meanwhile, he has got infected by dengue in February 2008. He and his family never had an idea of dengue infection in their location since their household is well-managed and no access to dengue mosquitoes (*Aedes* species). An investigating team has found dengue mosquitoes in the location and a breeding place which is a flower bush – *Bromilia* plant (*Cutex* plant) planted on a tree branch. The patient was admitted to a private hospital and given intensive care due to seriousness of his illness. He did not feel any stress or tension arising due to fear of dying, though the situation was critical. This is the ninth occasion that he has encountered the death episode. However, the patient's courageous behaviour has become a dilemma or extraordinary situation to outsiders who are around him at the moment and ward staff. The following day onward there is a slight progress of the blood count and all family members, friends and relatives have visited the patient regularly while extending their cooperation to all challenges faced by the family members.

After four days in the intensive care unit the patient has shifted to a general ward under continuous medical treatment and investigations. The progress made by the patient resulted in discharging after seven days in the hospital. Utmost care by the medical experts, support of others and their good wishes are the contributing factors of the improvement. Now, the researcher has grasped complete fact about his illness and he is in a good position to do his own analysis and find an insider's view on dengue infection.

This is an ethnographic study on illness and behaviour of all important stakeholders of the entire incident. The study reveals that the dengue infection could be spread through different sources, particularly it can be breed in many places very common to us as well as in exceptional places. The infection poses real challenges to people who need proper attention from medical aspects and also from family aspects. The community around the patient is very important to reduce stress as well as for the healing process. Ultimately, the researcher's experience as an outsider as well as an insider will be a vital factor pertaining to do more research and find out more practical solution to eradicate the dengue epidemic from the Sri Lankan society.

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