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## Worm wars



Two kids in Kenya show they've swallowed their deworming pills. (Good Ventures / Innovations for Poverty Action)

- A controversy has broken out in the global health world over whether "deworming" programs are effective.

[**Vox / Julia Belluz**]

- Two economists, Berkeley's Edward Miguel and Harvard's Michael Kremer, published a randomized controlled trial in 2004 suggesting that giving entire schools in poor countries deworming pills (which kill parasitic gut worms) was a cost-effective way to boost health, school performance, and attendance.

### [Econometrica / Edward Miguel and Michael Kremer]

- The paper sparked more research into the area and encouraged the development of deworming charities, including the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative and the Deworm the World Initiative, which the influential charity evaluator GiveWell rates as top charities.

### [GiveWell]

- Miguel and Kremer opened their data up so replicators could look at it, and those replicators argued that the results didn't hold up to further analysis, and the effects of mass deworming were minimal.

### [BuzzFeed / Ben Goldacre]

- That led to an immediate backlash from other development experts, who savaged the replication for being poorly done. Columbia economist Chris Blattman: "you have throw so much crazy shit at Miguel-Kremer to make the result go away that I believe the result even more than when I started."

### [Chris Blattman]

- GiveWell argued that the replications didn't do much to undermine the overall case for deworming, which rests more on findings about its effects on earnings, which the replications didn't challenge.

### [GiveWell / Alexander Berger]

- Long story short: the Miguel-Kremer was not totally free of errors, and it's good that it's being reexamined, but deworming is still a good idea, as is giving cash and anti-malarial bednets, as GiveWell also recommends.

### [GiveWell]