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Prevalence and pattern of superficial fungal infections among primary school pupils in Nnewi and Ukpok

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Objectives: we examined the prevalence and pattern of SFIs among primary school pupils in Nnewi and Ukpok.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 1562 primary school pupils between April and July, 2019. Subjects were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21.

Results: The pupils had a mean age of 9.0 ± 2.0 years and male: female ratio of 1:1. The overall prevalence of SFIs was 28.9%. The prevalence of SFIs was significantly higher among pupils in public compared to private schools (39.9% versus 14.6%, $p < 0.001$). Tinea capitis was the predominant form accounting for 81.4% (367/451) of SFIs. The black dot type (53.3%) and gray patch (35.4%) were the commonest tinea capitis variants. Other SFIs identified among the children were tinea corporis (8.5%) and pityriasis versicolor (8.5%), tinea fasciei (3.6%), tinea unguis (3.1%), and cutaneous candidiasis (0.3%). The most prevalent organisms were *T. tonsurans* (37.9%), *T. mentagrophyte* (28.8%) and *T. rubrum* (18.7%). About a third (34.1% [154/451]) of children who had SFI receive no form of treatment while majority (67.4% [174/258]) of those who were treated received inappropriate treatment using local remedies.

Conclusion: The burden of SFI is high among school children in Nnewi area, especially among those who attend public schools. There's need to create awareness on preventive strategies such as avoidance of overcrowding, improved personal hygiene and environmental sanitation as well as prompt/proper treatment of SFIs among school children and their caregivers.

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