Schistosoma haematobium infections in preschool children from two rural communities in Ijebu East, south-western Nigeria

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Abstract

There is an urgent need for information on schistosomiasis in preschool children, who are often excluded in mass treatment programmes. The prevalence and intensity of *Schistosoma haematobium* infection were determined in preschool children aged ≤ 6 years in two rural communities in Ijebu East, south-western Nigeria. Two urine samples each were collected from 83 preschool children from the two communities, tested for microhaematuria using reagent strips and then processed and examined with a microscope for S. *haematobium* eggs. Focus group discussions on perceptions of the disease and water contact practices were held in the communities with their guardians, caregivers and preschool children, using an interview guide. The prevalence of S. *haematobium* in the two communities was 14 (16.9%), with no significant differences $(P = 0.661)$ in infection rate between boys (18.4%) and girls (14.7%). Both prevalence and intensity of infection did not increase significantly with age in both Korede and Obada community.. However, there were significant differences in prevalence of infection between the two communities $(P = 0.035)$. There was no association $(P = 0.750)$ between intensity in boys (0.176 eggs/10ml urine) and girls (0.110 eggs/10ml urine). Focal group discussions with guardians and caregivers revealed that preschool children acquired infection early in their lives through exposure to infected stream water by their mothers, while the older children visit the stream for playing, bathing and swimming. It has therefore become imperative for preschool children to be included in the planning of schistosomiasis intervention programmes as a means of red ucing transmission.