SUMMARY

Helminthic infestations have a tremendous negative impact on health and well being of school aged children.

This study was undertaken to compare the prevalence of intestinal helminth, and to identify the risk factors associated with such worms among primary school children aged 6-12 years in a rural and urban community, and to determine the relationship between intestinal helminths and nutritional status of the children.

A four months descriptive cross-sectional survey was carried out among 304 rural and urban 6-12 year olds in Ganmo community and Ilorin metropolis.

The prevalence in the rural group was 17.6% while that of the urban pupils was 18.5%. The difference was not statistically significant (p=0.839). The factors that were significantly associated with the risk of acquisition of helminthic infections were: (i) age of the child, (ii) education of the mother, and (iii) type of toilet.

The prevalence of stunting and wasting in infested rural children was higher (23.7%; 13.6%) compared to that in the urban area (10.7%; nil). The difference was not statistically significant. The haemoglobin concentration of rural infected children was significantly lower compared to the urban children. But the Z-scores were not affected.

This study demonstrates that, at point of survey, the prevalence of intestinal helminth in rural and urban communities was similar in the population studied. There is also a negative relationship between intestinal helminth and the nutritional status of rural children.

Furthermore if control activities were to be instituted, the risk factors for acquisition of intestinal helminth namely: age of child, mother’s education and type of toilet, have to be addressed.
It is therefore recommended that effort at control of intestinal helminth among children be directed at both rural and urban children through targeted antihelmintic treatment.