SUMMARY

This study was conducted to determine the prevalence of superficial fungal infections among primary school children in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

A semi-structured interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to obtain the sociodemographic characteristics of the pupils and level of socioeconomic status was assessed using the modified wealth index. History of possible predisposing factors such as visits to local barber was also sought. The pupils were examined from head to toe for the presence of any superficial fungal infections and lesions seen were documented; appropriate skin scrapings were taken and sent to the laboratory for microscopy and culture.

The study population consisted of eight hundred pupils randomly selected from ten schools- six publicly funded and four privately owned primary schools. Two hundred and eighty age and sex matched pupils who had no superficial fungal infection were chosen from the remaining five hundred and twenty pupils as controls. Male pupils constituted 51% of respondents while the females were 49%. More than half (54.8%) of the respondents were in the age group 9 -12 years, about a third of them (36.6%) were in the age group 5 – 8 years while the rest (8.6%) were in the age group 13 – 16 years. The mean age for all the respondents was 9.42 ±2.00.

The prevalence of superficial fungal infections among the 800 respondents was 35% (280 pupils). Prevalence was found to be highest among the age group 9 – 12 years. Among the dermatophytosis, tinea capitis was the commonest with a prevalence of 26.9%, tinea unguium, tinea corporis and tinea faciei had a prevalence of 0.8%, 0.6%, and 0.5% respectively. Tinea manuum had the least prevalence of 0.1%. There was no case of tinea pedis observed. Pityriasis versicolor was the non-dermatophytosis seen with a prevalence of 4.4%. No case of candidiasis was seen. In some pupils, more than one type of superficial fungal infections were seen and some
had a mixed infection of dermatophytosis and yeast infection. Pityriasis versicolor with tinea capitis occurred in 4.3% of the pupils with superficial fungal infection.

Laboratory findings showed that, *Microsporum, Trichophyton* and *Epidermophyton* were observed with 5 different species that included *Microsporum audounii* as the leading organism isolated (28%); followed by *Trichophyton rubrum* (21.7%) while *Epidermophyton floccosum* was the least isolated (5.1%). Other isolates in the study were *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* and *Trichophyton schoeleinii*. The non dermatophyte moulds identified were *Penicillium* (12%), *Aspergillus fumigatus* (8.4%) and *Aspergillus niger* (6.4%).

The possible predisposing factors to the development of superficial fungal infections identified in this study included the use of clippers provided at the local barbing saloon, low socioeconomic status, and poor infrastructure of some schools such as uncemented floors.