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Prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections and their associations with anthropometric measurements of school children in selected primary schools of Wukro Town, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia

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The present study was to determine prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections and their associations with anthropometric measurements among school children of Wukro town, Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia. The design of the study was a cross-sectional epidemiological investigation involving a sample population of 384 school children from grade one to grade eight in two purposively selected primary schools located in Wukro town during March-May 2011/2012. A total of 384 fresh stool samples of school-children were examined using direct wet-mount technique. The overall prevalence of intestinal parasitic infection was 60.7% (58.2% in males and 62.8% in females). Multiple infections with two and above parasites were found in 7.5% (29) of the positive stool samples. The prevalence of protozoan parasites, *E. histolytica, G. lamblia* and *I. beli* was 23.2%, 16.9% and 4.4%, respectively. Similarly, the prevalence of helminth infections, *A. lumbricoides, Hookworm, T. trichiura, S. mansoni, E. vermicularis, H. nana* and *Teania saginata* was 5.7%, 3.9%, 3.1%, 3.1%, 1.3%, 1% and 0.8%, respectively. The prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections was significantly associated with some of risk factors, such as family size, source of water and its handling and availability of latrines (p=0.000, p=0.003 and p=0.001, respectively). Even though there were high parasitic infections, they were not statistically associated with some socio-demographic factors, such as parents educational level, personal hygiene, life skills, awareness to parasitic infections, residence and wearing shoe or not. A significant association was found between intestinal parasitic infections and underweight students (p=0.002). Underweight school-children (34.6%) had a higher prevalence of parasitic infection as compared with other anthropometric indices (wasting and stunting). In summary, intestinal parasitic protozoan infections represent a public health problem in the school-children of Wukro town. Local health sector and any concerned bodies should collaborate with school health program for delivering health education to increase the knowledge, attitude and practice of school children as to how transmission of intestinal parasitic infection is prevented such as improvement of personal hygiene and environmental sanitation and shoe wearing habit.

Biography

Eleni Kidane has completed BEd degree in Biology from Dire Dawa University in 2009. She has then joined the School of Graduate Studies of Haramaya University to pursue MSc in Applied Biology and completed in 2012. Presently she is an Associate Researcher at Ethiopia Public Health Institute.

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