Abstract

Introduction. Pediculosis is one of the most important chronic infestations in schoolchildren worldwide. Infestations show a high prevalence among the poorest children in developing countries, and it is associated with substandard hygienic practices. Objective. The prevalence was estimated and seasonality described of a Pediculus infestation of seven months duration in a nursery school. Associations were explored among the standards of hygienic practices and hair characteristics. Materials and methods. One hundred and seventy-eight nursery school children between the ages of 3 months to 5 years, from the nursery school located at National University of Colombia, Bogotá, were participants in the study. The children were examined for presence of Pediculus humanus infestation each month for seven months. The lengths and thicknesses of hair were measured at the first examination. A survey requesting information on socioeconomic and hygienic practices was provided to the caretakers of the children. Prevalence rates with 95% confidence intervals were estimated for each explored association, and also to describe the differences of prevalences between age groups in each period. Results. The highest prevalence was found in the children between the ages of 4 and 5 years, at the beginning of the school year. A positive association was indicated between Pediculus infestation and hair longer than 11.5 cm [prevalence rate (PR)=2.0; 95% confidence interval (CI): 0.82-4.8], washing the hair less than three times a week (PR=1.58; 95%CI: 0.58-4.7), as well as sharing cleaning implements (PR=1.31; 95%CI: 38-4.46) and living with more than five people at home (PR=2.04; 95%CI: 0.8-5.06). Due to the limited size of the sample, none of the associations found were statistically significant. Conclusion. Pediculus infestation has a high prevalence in children of the nursery school studied. This infestation is associated with substandard hygienic practices, living with more than five people at home and the length of hair.

Keywords

Pediculus, lice Infestations/epidemiology, prevalence, risk factors; child, preschool; social conditions.