

Epidemiology of pediculosis in southwestern Iran (2008-2013)

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Introduction: Head lice infestation affects millions of humans each year, particularly children of 5-14 years of entire socioeconomic categories. *Pediculus capitis* especially infest persons with poor hygiene, and it is an important challenge among the vagabond people and in refugee camping sites. The present study was conducted in order to determine the epidemiology of *Pediculus capitis* from 2008 to 2013 in eastern areas of Ahvaz County, southwestern Iran.

Methods: The gathered head lice were transferred into glass bottles containing 70% alcohol. The hair and scalp of each person was examined for lice or nits by a trained examiner under the supervision of the principal investigator. The age, place of residence, month, sex, history on infestation of the host were recorded. The analysis was performed using SPSS version 18.

Results: A total of 5446 infected cases were detected, that 72.1% of them resided in urban areas. The prevalence of head lice was highest (41.2%) in age group of 6-10 years and lowest (6.9%) in age group of less than six years. The majority of cases (49.7%) were detected in winter. Statistically significant relationships were found between head lice infestation, and factors such as residency status, season, and age groups ($P < 0.05$). The prevalence of infestation was significantly higher in girls (94.4%) than in boys 5.6 % ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: We found a high prevalence rate of head lice infestation in this study. Gender, age group, season and a history of contact with an infected person were the main modifiable risk factors.

Keywords: Trend, Epidemiology, Incidence, Head Lice