# Health Status of Primary School Children in Teaching Districts (Dhankuta and Sunsari) of B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences

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Date: 2003

**Background**

The age group 5 to 15 years is on the threshold of adulthood on whom the progress and welfare of community depends. Therefore it is necessary to provide targeted services to improve their health status. This study thus is an attempt to determine the health status and morbidity of primary school children from grade I to grade V in the hilly and terai region of eastern Nepal.

**Methods**

A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out from June 2003 to September 2003. A total of 818 students from grade I to grade V were included from government primary schools. A simple random sampling technique was use to select five primary schools. A questionnaire was used to collect information. Standard procedures were used to obtain weights and heights of the children. The collected data was entered in Microsoft Excel and analysis was done with the help SPSS statistical package.

**Results**

Most of the morbid conditions found in the present study were related to malnutrition and infectious diseases; anaemia (58%), skin diseases (20%), dental carries (19.8%), lymphadenopathy (10.5%). In the prevalence of skin diseases, the commonest one was pediculosis followed by ring worm and scabies. Behaviour disorders like nail biting, thumb sucking, prefer to be alone were common in girls. Among all students overall 12.3% had behaviour disorders. The total percentage of stunting and under nutrition was 65% and 82% respectively. According to waterlow classification, 62.7% were normal in nutritional status while 21.5% were stunted and 10.5% wasted. The treatment preference of teachers for sick students during school hours was to take the sick children to nearby hospital. There was no school health programs in any of the surveyed school but the school teacher showed their willingness to cooperate with health personnel for school health program in their schools.

**Conclusions**

This study highlighted the need for initiation of school health program in the schools with the support of District Health Office with more emphasis on improving personal hygiene of the students, control and prevention of diseases like parasitic infections and anaemia to ensure overall improvement of their nutritional well being.

**Keywords:** health status; morbidity; nutritional status; primary school children; school health program.