



ATOPIC ECZEMA/DERMATITIS

WHERE ATOPIC DERMATITIS IS RARE

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Introduction: Atopic Dermatitis (AD) is the commonest chronic inflammatory skin disease worldwide in children and adults with escalating prevalence and large unmet need for safe effective treatment. In Nigeria, prevalence has escalated from 0.3% to 15% among under-5 children in urban but remains rare in rural communities.

Pathogenesis is complex interaction of environmental factors with self-perpetuating epidermal barrier dysfunction, dysregulated immune responses and TH2 driven inflammation. Indications that early life exposures are key determinants of immune mediated diseases later in life point to the neonatal period when the first microbial encounter sets the stage for subsequent long term host - microbial relationship.

Objective: To explore traditional neonatal skin care practices in some rural communities in Nigeria for possible relevance to the low prevalence of Atopic Dermatitis.

Materials and Methods: Exploratory Qualitative Study Design. Duration: 6months. Participants: 100 parturient women and their newborn. Setting: Six rural communities where AD is rare and deliveries by Government Licensed Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA), and three urban maternity centers serviced by State Registered Nurses and Midwives. We observed the women at delivery and skin care regimen of their newborn, for the first 24hours with follow up at 6weeks. We analysed the post natal and under-five clinic records.

Results: At the Urban Under-5 clinics prevalence of AD was 4-8% against 0.05% TBA clinics. TBA births were 100% vaginal; 44% were Caesarian Section at urban maternities. At the TBA centers, skin care regimen comprised plant infusion, cleansers and vegetable oil moisturisers all with pH 6-7. The urban centers regimen comprised municipal water supply, baby soaps and moisturisers with pH 7.8 – 8.6.

Conclusion: In communities where AD is rare, vaginal delivery is the norm, skin care regimen in the first 6 weeks is with pH neutral or acid agents.

