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**INFECTIOUS DISEASES AMONG FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA**Vijitha De Silva *University of Ruhuna, Galle, Sri Lanka*

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**Objectives** Several researchers have identified teaching as a high-risk occupation for infectious diseases as their occupational environment is characterised by personal contacts with children. This is particularly more important in tropical developing countries such as Sri Lanka. This study was carried out with the objective of identifying the prevalence of different infectious diseases among the female primary school teachers in the Southern province of Sri Lanka.

**Methods** Six hundred and sixty female primary school teachers employed in the southern province of Sri Lanka were selected for the study using a multi-stage cluster sampling method. Data was collected on infectious diseases during the last 12 months, using a structured self administered questionnaire.

**Results** More than half the (50.6%) primary school teachers had suffered an infectious disease during last 1 year. Approximately 6% reported two or more diseases. The most

common infectious disease was the common cold (46.6%). 4.7% had conjunctivitis while 2.8% reported chickenpox. Scabies were reported by 1.9% of teachers. Mumps and measles were reported by less than 1% of teachers.

**Conclusions** Significant proportion of teachers had developed infectious diseases during the last year. This can increase the sickness absence of teachers and therefore can reduce the quality of education received by the children. However, we cannot attribute all these diseases to their profession.