

Abstract:

The aim of this study was to establish the carrier rate of group A beta haemolytic streptococci in school children in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. One thousand and two randomly selected school children aged 5-7 years had their throats swabbed twice for both culture and direct antigen detection of group A streptococci. One hundred and fourteen children (11.3%) had both a positive antigen and culture test, while 216 (21.6%) had antigen-positive tests only and 16 (1.5%) had a positive culture only. Thus, the combination of culture and antigen detection revealed a carrier rate of 35.4% in the children examined. We conclude that in an affluent but isolated desert area on the Tropic of Cancer, group A streptococcal carriage rate is high. Antigen detection is superior to culture techniques in asymptomatic carrier studies.