

## **Abstract:**

**OBJECTIVE:** To study infections complicating ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt surgery in children with non-tumour hydrocephalus at the Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi. **DESIGN:** A retrospective survey. **SETTING:** Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi between January 1982 and December 1991. **SUBJECTS:** Three hundred and forty five patients who underwent V-P shunt placement for non-tumour hydrocephalus. **RESULTS:** Three hundred and forty five patients underwent V-P shunt placement for non-tumour hydrocephalus. There were 107 infection episodes involving 85 patients. The ages of these patients ranged from three months to 12 years. Most of the patients had congenital hydrocephalus. The infection rate was high (24.6%) although comparable to infection rates reported for clean surgery in the hospital. Fever, septic wounds and features of shunt malfunction were the main presenting features. Bacteriological studies confirmed *Staphylococcus aureus* and coagulase negative staphylococci as the two most commonly isolated micro-organisms. **CONCLUSION:** This study emphasises need to reduce infection rate in ventriculoperitoneal shunt surgery at the Kenyatta National Hospital. Definitive surgical treatment for hydrocephalus was in most cases delayed and this problem was also observed during revision of infected shunts. Late presentation was often due to ignorance and the fact that many patients went for traditional forms of treatment first before going to hospital.