

Antifungal Effectiveness of 1- (2, 4 - Dinitrophenyl) - 2 - (2, 2, 2 -Triphenyl-1-Phenyl Ethylidene) Hydrazine On *Epidermophyton Floccosum*: Wistar Rats As Case Study

¹Oyedeji, F.O., Odeniyan, T.O ¹, Fawehinmi, A.B.², Balogun, O.M³ & B.B. Adeleke

¹ Chemistry Department, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

²Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency, Lagos, Nigeria.

³Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy, Trans-Ekulu, Enugu, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author; E mail. Omoeage2002@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Fungal attack is a major concern in the health status of the human skin. There exist a number of standard drugs for the treatment of skin fungal infections. However, there are increasing reports of resistance by pathogens to current antifungal treatment regimes, hence the need to seek new compounds that are effective and safe antifungal agents. Hydrazones have been reported to have biological and pharmacological activities. In this study, we have investigated the antifungal activity of a new hydrazone, 1-(2, 4 - dinitrophenyl) -2-(2, 2, 2 - triphenyl - 1 - phenyl ethylidene) hydrazine using *Epidermophyton floccosum* infected Wistar rat skin, as a model. A sub-cultured clinical isolate of *Epidermophyton floccosum* was used in inoculating the rats. Different ointments containing 0.5%, 1.0% and 2.0% w/w of the synthesized compound in Blue Seal Vaseline alongside 1% Clotrimazole (standard drug) and the vehicle (Blue Seal Vaseline) were used to treat the inoculated rats in order to test the antifungal activity of the compound. Skin sensitivity tests were carried out with the various drugs. Histopathological analysis of the fungal hyphae, hair follicles, sebaceous glands, inflammation and tissue destruction rates of the skin of infected and hydrazone treated Wistar rats, when compared with the standard antifungal drug was carried out to confirm the effectiveness of the formulated creams. The efficacy of the compound showed that it was concentration dependent in the order; 2% > 1% > 0.5%. The 1% and 2% formulations also seemed to be more effective than the standard drug. In conclusion, the synthesized compound appeared to be a potential anti-fungal drug for the management of *Epidermophyton floccosum* related infections.

Keywords: Anti-fungal efficacy, *Epidermophyton floccosum*, Hydrazone, Skin sensitivity.

Aims Research Journal Reference Format:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The interaction of man with his environment often leads to the development of various diseases in man. Human beings have sought relief from these medical conditions by using chemicals as drugs.

A group of compounds that have been found to have many biological activities are hydrazones produced by a condensation reaction between ketones or aldehydes with hydrazines. Hydrazones and their derivatives have been shown to possess diverse biological and pharmacological properties such as antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antifungal, anti-tuberculosis, antiviral, anticancer, antiplatelet, antimalarial, anticonvulsant, cardio-protective, anthelmintic, antiprozoal, anti-trypanosomal, anti-schistosomiasis and so on (1-17). However, with time, many fungi causing infections develop resistance to available drugs (18) and hence the constant need to seek new drugs that are safe and effective against such infections. It is in the search for new effective chemicals that we synthesized a new hydrazone, 1-(2,4-dinitrophenyl)-2-(2,2,2-triphenyl-1-phenylethylidene)hydrazine (19).

Computational studies including molecular docking (20,21) have shown that these hydrazones may be effective antibacterial (20), anti-tubercular (21) and antifungal (20) agents. A major disease of the skin is fungal infestations. There are increasing reports of resistance by pathogens to current antifungal treatment regime (18). In this study, we have investigated the antifungal effectiveness of the synthesized hydrazone by means of animal study using Blue Seal Vaseline as a vehicle for delivering the chemical. Clotrimazole, was used as a standard drug

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Synthesis of the Hydrazone

The hydrazone was synthesized using Brady's reagent as previously reported (18) and characterised. The reagents used were analytical grade. 2,2,2-triphenyl acetophenone, 2,4-dinitrophenyl hydrazine (Sigma-Aldrich chemical company), concentrated sulphuric acid (98% assay), 95% ethanol and distilled methanol.

Preparation of Creams

Samples of cream containing 0.5%, 1%, and 2% w/w active ingredient (hydrazone) in Blue Seal Vaseline respectively were prepared and commercial Ytcan cream containing 1% clotrimazole was used as standard drug.

Preparation of the Dermatophyte (*Epidermophyton floccosum*)

Clinical isolates of *Epidermophyton floccosum* were obtained from Spectra Lab Medical Diagnostic Services, Sagamu in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Preparation of the Sub-culture of Micro-organism

A loop of well grown nutrient agar micro-organism of clinical isolates of *Epidermophyton floccosum* was suspended in 30ml of normal saline water in a plain bottle and kept at a temperature of 25°C in the laboratory fridge for 48 hours. This was observed regularly for the growth of organisms and also for any contamination. The well grown fresh sub-cultured organisms were used for inoculation during experimental investigation.

Laboratory Animals

Albino rats weighing between 120-150g were purchased from the Experimental Animal Unit of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Ibadan. The rats were kept in cages at controlled room temperature 29°C-30°C. Well accessible ceramic feeding bowls were used to provide food and water for the animals. The weights of the animals were taken for each of the stipulated time and these were juxtaposed with their feed intake. Each rat hair was shaved clean at the side of the belly in a dimension approximately 2cm² by 2cm² and left for 24 hours after which inoculation carried out. The inoculation was done by injecting 2ml of sub-cultured *Epidermophyton floccosum* followed by routine feeding and cleaning. Seven days after inoculation, treatment with the formulated active ingredients of different concentrations, standard drug, and vehicle started. At the end of seven days of treatment, the animals were euthanized by cervical dislocation. Their skins were harvested and preserved for histopathology study.

Experimental selection and grouping of animals

Forty-two (47) animals were used and were grouped into 7 groups of 6 rats and a group consisting of 5 animals which were used for skin sensitivity test.

1. Group Zero - Non inoculated animals used for skin sensitivity test.
2. Group one - Non inoculated animals
3. Group two - Inoculated animals but not treated (negative control).
4. Group three-Inoculated animals treated with Ytacan cream containing 1% Clotrimazole (Standard drug) -The positive control.
5. Group four - Inoculated animals treated with Blue Seal Vaseline alone (Vehicle).
6. Group five - Inoculated animals treated with 0.5% drug formulation alone.
7. Group six - Inoculated animals treated with 1% drug formulation alone.
8. Group seven - Inoculated animals treated with 2% drug formulation alone.

Skin Sensitivity Tests

All the formulated creams containing the synthesized compound in the Blue Seal Vaseline were tested on the shaved skin of group-zero Wistar rats. The test samples were applied in the morning on the shaved sites and allowed to remain there until the following morning. The treated surfaces were then rinsed with water, and patted dry with absorbent paper. The site was examined 24hrs later for signs of irritation like rashes, swelling and redness.

Histopathological studies

4cm² skin area were cut and the skin tissues were fixed in 10% formalin before castifying into 30% phenol acid for 24hours. The tissues were dehydrated and were processed gradually through graded ethanol starting from 70, 80, 90, 95%, and absolute ethanol. The time frame for the tissues in each grade of alcohol was 1 hour while it was kept for 2 hours in absolute ethanol. Xylene was then added to remove the ethanol and at the same time render the tissue transparent. The skin tissues were then impregnated with paraffin wax which had been heated in the oven for 1 hour at 50°C after which the tissues went through sectioning at 4µm with microtome in water bath. The section was placed on micro slide and then put in oven for dewaxing. It was then stained with haematoxylin for 15 minutes and excess acid washed off and then counter stained in eosin for 3 minutes. The tissues were then dehydrated using ethanol and the slide remain in the xylene until it was mounted using DPX.

Skin biopsy samples were examined for the presence of fungal hyphae, hair follicles, sebaceous gland, inflammation and tissue destruction using light microscope. De-keratinization was also measured

Epidermal thickness

This was obtained by measuring the distance between the dermo epidermal borderline and the beginning of the horny layer. Five measurements per animal were made in every 10 scales and the mean of the different animals was calculated. The change in epidermal thickness was then calculated. It is often regarded to be representative of the extent to which a substance causes irritation (22).

ET = Epidermal thickness

$$\Delta \text{ Epidermal thickness} = \frac{\text{ET of treated group} - \text{ET of control group}}{\text{ET of control group}} \times 100 \%$$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Skin Sensitivity

No irritation or inflammation was noticed on the skin of the animals when each of the different formulations and the control drug and vehicle was applied on the shaved portions. This showed that the formulated drugs and the control drug and vehicle could be used for the experiment.

General Discussion

The first sign of the breaching of the protective mantle of the skin is shown by presence of itchy areas, rashes and inflammation of the skin which can be measured by the swelling of the epidermal tissues in a gradual manner as the concentration of the cause of inflammation increases within the tissue (23). Whether the breaching is caused by allergens or microorganisms. In many cases, the keratinocytes in the hair follicles become infected, causing de-keratinization which eventually lead to tissue destruction. There are chemicals that can ameliorate the reactions and thus reverse the effect as can be seen in this study (Table 1& 2 and Figures 1).

Epidermal Thickness

In this study, epidermal thickness varies in the order Group 2 > Group 4 > Group 5 > Group 3 > Group 6 > Group > Group 1 (Table 1). The most irritated rat skin belonged to the untreated group, while the least irritated were seen among rats that were not inoculated with the fungi. Showing that the infection causes this type of irritation. The drugs were seen to ameliorate the inflammation and in concentration dependent manner. The highest dose of the prepared ointment was able to completely stop skin inflammation as shown by reduction in epidermal thickness (Figure1).

Table 1: Epidermal thickness of skin infected by *Epidermophyton floccosum*.

Group1	21.08	21.07	21.07	21.09	21.07	21.08	±0.01
Group2	79.59	79.83	84.53	82.74	84.10	82.16	±2.09
Group3	44.20	44.11	44.58	41.98	43.64	43.70	±0.91
Group4	74.75	72.96	72.36	72.62	73.01	73.14	±0.84
Group5	45.10	44.98	46.32	42.24	44.48	44.62	±1.34
Group6	28.10	28.09	28.09	28.11	28.09	28.07	±0.03
Group7	23.89	23.88	23.90	23.94	23.88	23.90	±0.02

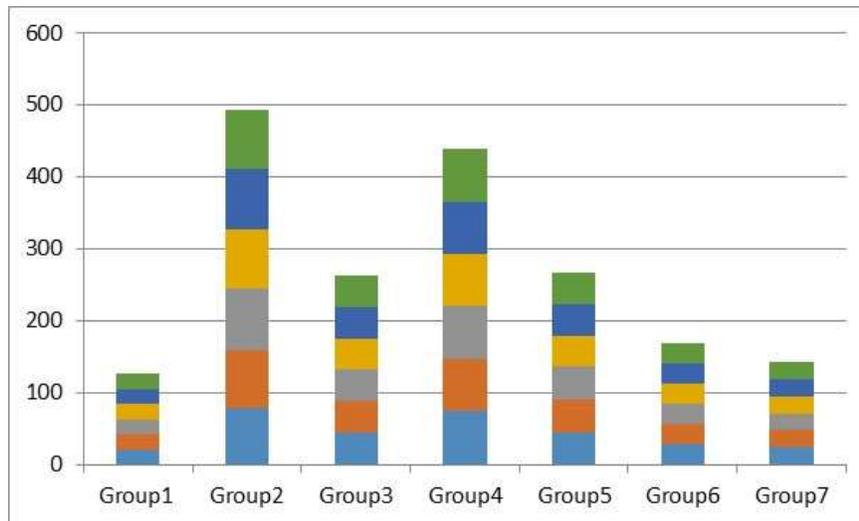


Figure 1: Epidermal thickness across groups with ointment concentration

Table: 2 Keratinization trends of skin infected by *Epidermophyton Floccosum*.

Group1	53.10	53.00	53.01	53.00	53.03	53.03	±0.04
Group2	20.50	20.75	21.39	20.77	23.62	21.40	±1.15
Group3	48.59	50.62	49.78	49.30	50.42	49.74	±0.74
Group4	20.52	21.09	21.98	21.65	24.02	21.85	±1.19
Group5	48.04	49.92	48.98	48.28	49.48	49.84	±0.71
Group6	49.68	49.98	49.56	49.86	49.47	49.71	±0.19
Group7	50.65	50.63	50.09	50.92	50.66	50.59	±0.29

The results of keratinization studies also showed similar trend as epidermal thickness (Table 2). Loss of keratinization can be used as a measure of tissue destruction. The study showed that Loss of keratinization was highest in group 2 which is the untreated group and lowest in group 7 which is the group treated with 2% hydrazone ointment. This is even better than that of group 3 the standard drug. The histopathological studies have used these results along with others to explain the effect of the concentration of treatment drug on the of the study rats (Table 3 & Plates 1-7)

Animal Studies

Group 1 (uninfected rats/ Normal Control)

There is no observable lesion. No inflammation, but mild tissue destruction was observed in the group (Table 3). There was absence of fungal hyphae, showing that the animals were in the uninfected state. There was marked presence of hair follicles and sebaceous gland which is associated with healthy rat skin. Inflammation and discontinuity/tissue destruction was mild (Plate 1).

Table 3: Histopathological study results across study groups

Group	Fungal hyphae	Hair follicles	Sebaceous gland	Inflammation	Continuity/Tissue destruction
1	-	+++	+++	-	+
2	+++	-	-	+++	+++
3	-	+++	+++	-	-
4	+++	++	+	++	+++
5	+	++	++	+	+
6	-	++	++	-	-
7	-	+++	+++	-	-

Absent = -, Mild = +, Moderate = ++ Marked = +++

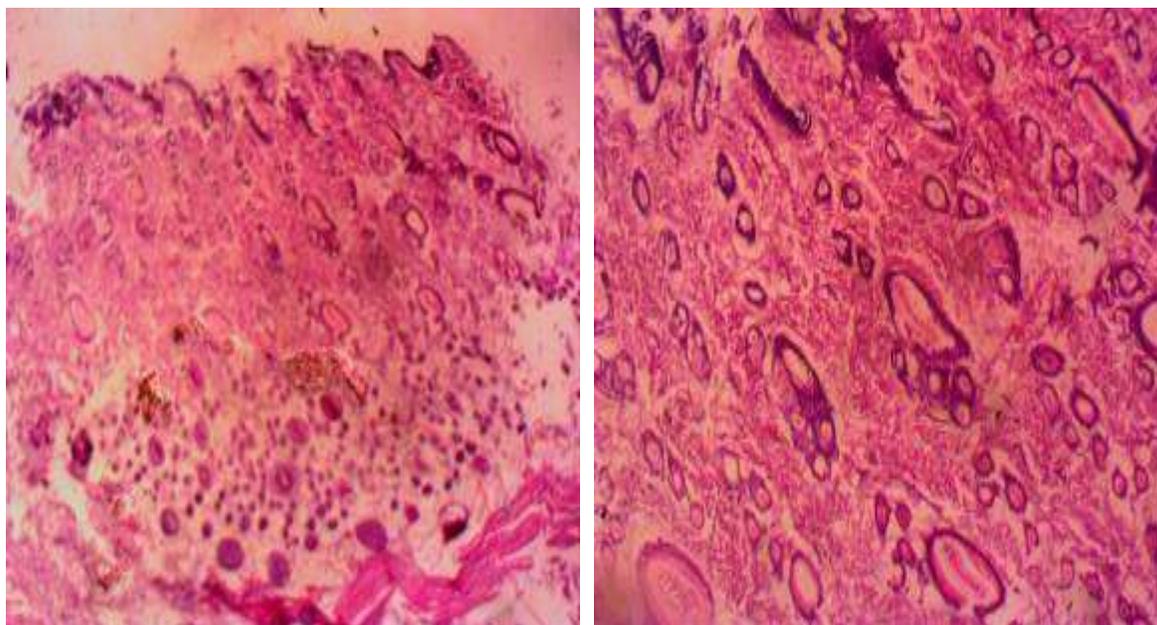


Plate 1: Skin of uninfected Wistar rat (normal control)

Group 2 (Infected but not treated rats)

There was severe dermatitis with obliterated adnexia. Marked inflammation of the skin and foci of discontinuity of the epidermis were observed, which indicated successful infection. There was a marked presence of fungal hyphae. There were no hair follicles and nor sebaceous glands as they had been destroyed. Marked tissue destruction was observed This indicated that the fungal infection was deeply rooted in comparison to the other groups (Plate 2).

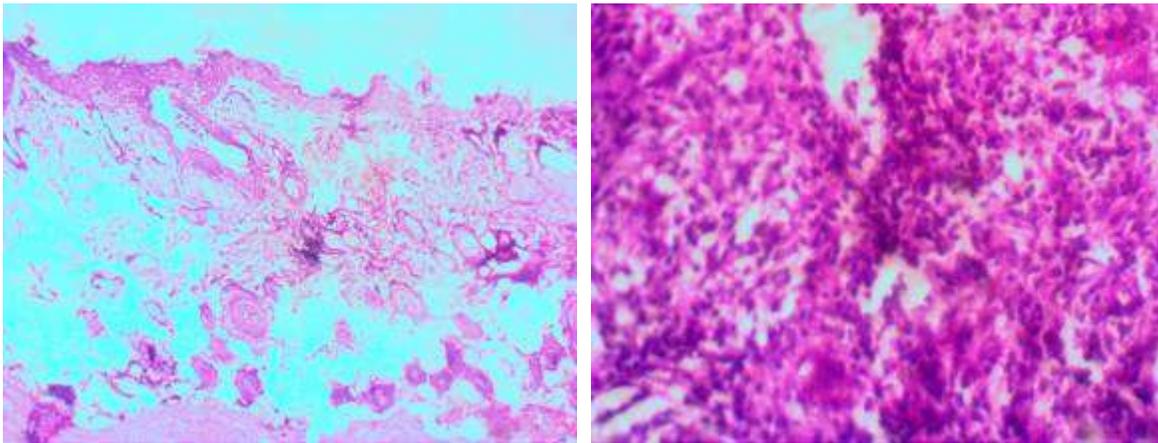


Plate 2: Skin of infected but not treated Wistar rat

Group 3 (Standard drug)

There was moderate dermatitis with obliterated adnexia. There were no fungal hyphae seen. Numerous hair follicles and sebaceous glands were observed. There was no inflammation nor tissue destruction, indicating control of fungal growth and treatment without harm to the rat skin (Plate 3).

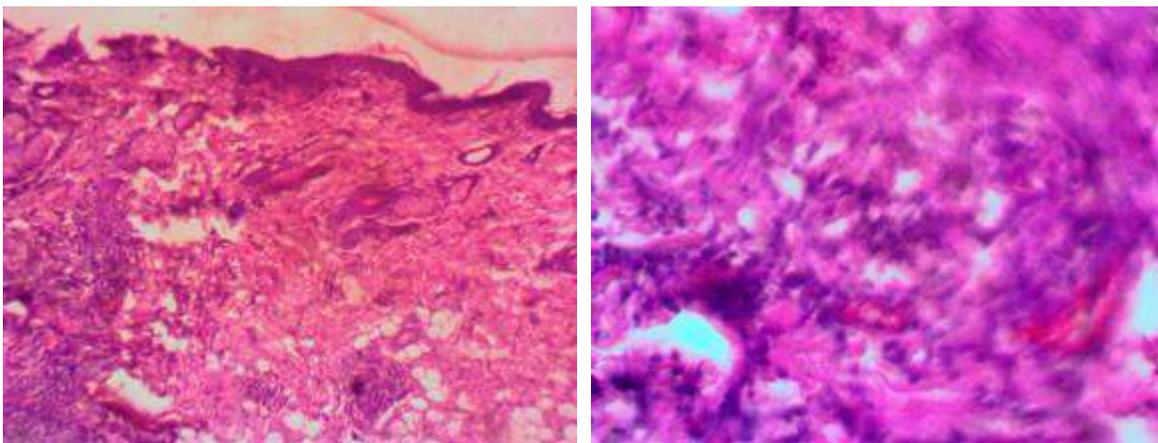


Plate 3: Skin of Wistar rat treated with 1% clotrimazole

Group 4 (Rats treated with Vaseline only (Vehicle))

There was hyperkeratosis, acanthosis with hydropic degeneration of keratinocytes. Marked presence of fungal hyphae was observed. There were moderate hair follicle and few sebaceous gland in the dermis. Skin inflammation was moderate while tissue destruction was marked. This showed that Vaseline had little or no effect on the inhibition the growth of fungi, when compared with the groups treated with hydrazone formulations (Plate 4).

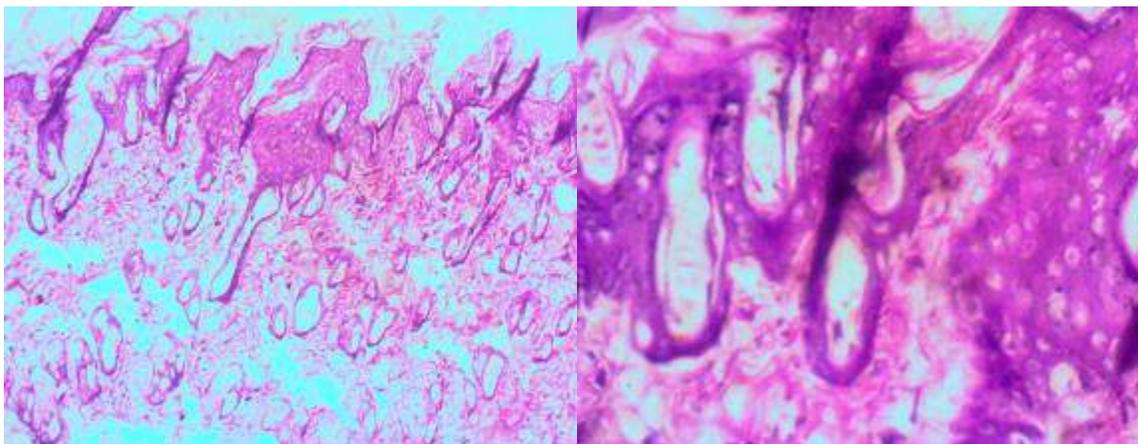


Plate 4: Rat skin treated with Vaseline only (vehicle)

Group 5 (rats treated with 0.5% hydrazone ointment)

There was hyperkeratosis, dermatitis and exocytosis. Mild presence of fungal hyphae in the dermis. The presence of sebaceous glands and hair follicles were mild. There was mild inflammation and tissue destruction. This shows that the formulation partially inhibited the growth of the fungal hyphae, but was not able to stop the destruction of hair follicles and the tissue (Plate 5), when compared with Groups 6 (1% ointment) and group 7 (2% ointment) which prevented inflammation and the destruction of hair follicles in the rat skins Plates 6 and 7).

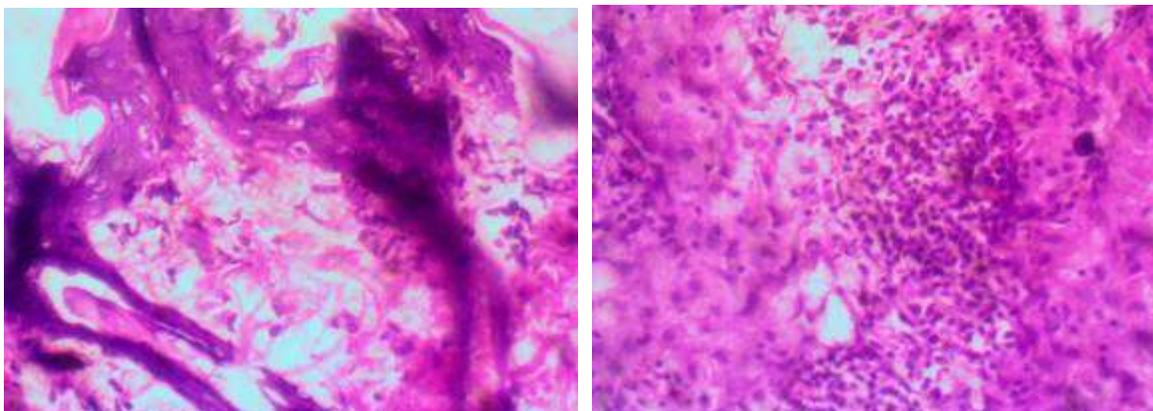


Plate 5: Wistar rat skin treated with 0.5% hydrazone formulation

Group 6 and Group 7 (1% and 2 % hydrazone ointment)

There is no observable lesion in both groups. No inflammation and no tissue destruction were observed. There was absence of fungal hyphae indicating that the drug was able to eradicate the infection caused by the dermatophyte. There were moderate hair follicles in the dermis and numerous sebaceous glands in Group 6 while the hair follicles and sebaceous glands were numerous in Group 7.

This suggests that though 1% formulation was effective, as it appeared to have protected the skin from all destructive effects of the fungi. The 2% formulation also appeared to be more effective than 1% clotrimazole (standard drug), (plate 6 and plate 7).

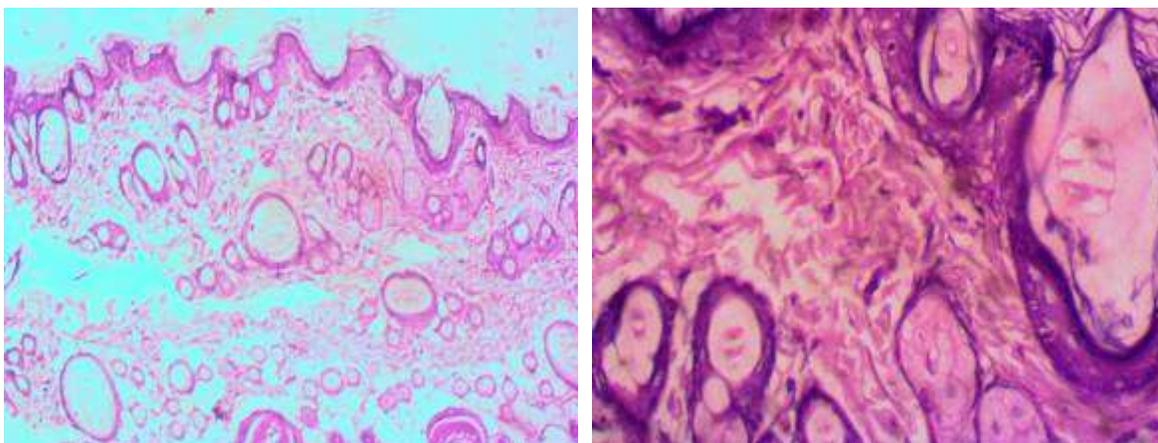


Plate 6: Rat skin treated with 1% hydrazone formulation

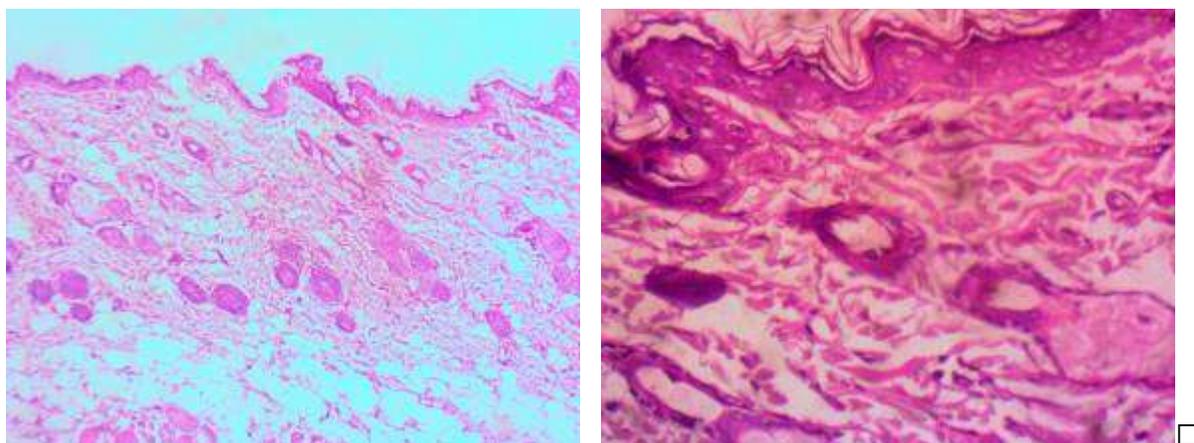


Plate 7: Rat skin treated with 2% hydrazone formulation

4. CONCLUSION

The efficacy of the formulations was concentration dependent in the order 0.5% <1% <2%. However, in order to reduce inflammation of the skin to the very minimum 2% formulation could be used. It was observed that 0.5% formulation was as effective as 1% clotrimazole. This study showed that the compound 1-(2, 4-dinitrophenyl)-2-(2,2,2 triphenyl-1-ethylidene) hydrazine had significant antifungal potentials which was concentration dependent. The 2% ointment of this compound showed similar activity as clotrimazole a standard antifungal drug already in market and much better irritation potential. Further toxicological profile of the compound needs to be determined, in order to predict its safety in use in humans.

Endnote

This work was carried out in collaboration between the authors. Author FOO designed the study and performed the statistical analysis and edited the final article. Author TOO wrote the protocol and the first draft, carried out the animal study. Author ABF managed the analysis of the study and the literature searches, while Author OMB supervised the animal study. Author BBA suggested the use of the hydrazone and provided chemicals for its synthesis and proof read the final draft.

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