**Introduction**

*Hymenolepis nana*, the dwarf tapeworm, is the smallest tapeworm to infect humans. It has a cosmopolitan distribution and is thought to be the most common tapeworm throughout the world. The infection is more frequently seen in children although adults are also infected.

**Life cycle**

The lifecycle of *H. nana* does not require an intermediate host, complete development occurring within a single host.

**Clinical Disease**

Infections due to *H. nana* may cause no symptoms even with heavy worm burdens. However, symptoms of anorexia, abdominal pain and diarrhoea have been reported. Heavy worm burdens may be caused by auto-infection which can be a problem in the immunocompromised.
**Laboratory Diagnosis**

Diagnosis is based on recovery and identification of the characteristic ova in a formol-ether concentrate of faeces. Ova are spherical or ovoid measuring 30 - 47μ in diameter. The onchosphere contains three pairs of hooklets and is surrounded by a membrane. This membrane has 2 polar thickenings from which arise threadlike filaments extending into the space between the membrane and the colourless hyaline shell, unlike those of *H. diminuta* which do not possess any filaments. Adult worms and proglottids are rarely seen in stool samples.

An ovum of *Hymenolepis nana*