inappropriately because of head lice, health care providers and non-specialists were invited to submit to the Harvard School of Public Health specimens that they found in children's hair when they suspected head lice (Pollack, Kiszewski, and Spielman, 2000). Analysis of 614 specimens revealed that lice and eggs were present in less than two thirds of these specimens, and only 53% of the specimens contained a live louse or viable eggs. Health professionals as well as non-specialists overdiagnosed pediculosis capitis and failed to distinguish active from extinct infestations. Eighty-two percent of the schools involved in this study had a "no-nits" policy, and noninfested children were excluded as often as children with active infestations.

In a study evaluating the presence of head lice in 1729 school-age children, a total of 28 children (1.6%) were found to have lice and 63 (3.6%) had nits with no lice (Williams, Reichert, MacKenzie, et al, 2001). Repeat assessment 2 weeks later revealed that only 18% of the children with nits alone developed lice. These researchers stated that having five or more nits within 6 mm (0.25 inch) of the head increased the risk of nit conversion, but most children with nits had no lice. The researchers concluded that school policies that excluded children with nits alone from school were not warranted.

The American Academy of Pediatrics updated guidelines for diagnosis and treatment of pediculosis in 2015. These guidelines state that "no-nit" policies in schools are detrimental, causing lost time in the classroom and inappropriate allocation of the school nurse's time, and that "no-nit" polices should be abandoned (Devore and Schutze, 2015).

"No-nit" policies state that when a school nurse finds head lice in a child's hair, that child is promptly sent home from school with directions for the parents to shampoo the child's hair and remove the lice. Parents comply with these directions and send the child back to school after shampooing and meticulously combing the child's hair. If the school nurse finds a single egg or nit remaining in the child's hair, the school's "no-nit" policy demands that the nurse exclude the child from school until the eggs or nits are completely removed. The problem is that the treatment does not eliminate all nits, but the nits left after treatment are inactive or dead, and harmless. Remnants of dead nits may remain attached to the hair for months or years. If the eggs are dead, there is no reason