

Assessing Nigerian caregivers' health-seeking behaviour when managing febrile illness and malaria in infants

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Introduction

Nigeria accounts for about 27 percent of the world's malaria cases, with children being disproportionately affected.^[1] Malaria Consortium conducted a scoping study to assess the health-seeking behaviour of caregivers when their children present with fever, which can often indicate malaria. The findings aim to inform the design of interventions that prevent and control childhood illnesses, including malaria.

Methods

- Qualitative research was carried out in Ebonyi and Osun states, Nigeria.
- We conducted six focus group discussions (FGDs) with caregivers, 13 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with community leaders, and seven key informant interviews (KIIs) with various health sector stakeholders in each state between June and July 2021.
- We carried out a thematic analysis to identify and interpret the patterns of health-seeking behaviour as reported by all stakeholders.

Results

- Most of the caregivers reported taking their children to hospitals, pharmacies and patent medicine stores when they were experiencing a fever or other symptoms of malaria.
- Approximately one-fifth of caregivers turned to traditional sources for the treatment of fever or malaria in infants.
- Up to one-third of caregivers sought help from traditional medicine before proceeding to orthodox sources when their children did not recover.
- As well as orthodox and traditional sources, caregivers also sought help from religious centres and used unprescribed over-the-counter drugs.

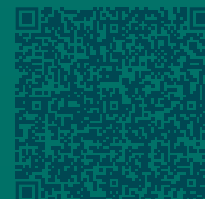
Conclusion

Caregivers use various approaches to treat their sick children, including orthodox and traditional medicines. Our findings suggest that concerted efforts are required to improve the health-seeking behaviour of caregivers to ensure children receive appropriate care in line with national policy recommendations for the diagnosis and treatment of fever and malaria.

Reference

- World Health Organization. *World malaria report 2020: 20 years of global progress and challenges*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020.

Caregivers use a mix of traditional and orthodox medicines, as well as unprescribed over-the-counter drugs, to treat febrile infants



Supplementary visuals

Table 1: Places where caregivers seek help when their infants are sick with malaria/fever

Characteristics	Ebonyi state					Osun state					Grand total
	Abakaliki	Afikpo North	Ezza North	State actors	State total	Ede South	Ife North	Orolu	State actors	State total	
Home remedy	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2
Patient medicine stores	1	3	1	2	7	2	14	4	2	22	29
Pharmacy stores	2	7	0	0	9	3	5	0	1	9	18
Private facility	2	4	0	0	6	2	8	5	0	15	21
Public facility	20	30	21	5	76	40	38	56	11	145	221
Fraudulent doctors	2	1	1	1	5	2	5	2	2	11	16
Religious centres	0	0	4	0	4	0	0	1	1	2	6
Traditional facility	6	5	10	5	26	4	8	8	6	26	52
Totals	33	50	37	13	133	53	80	76	23	232	365

Figure 2: Study states Ebonyi and Osun



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