Negative malaria test case management in the private retail outlets: Results from mystery patient surveys in Nigeria and Uganda

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Key messages
• Despite prior negative confirmatory test, 40% of mystery patients in Nigeria and 35% in Uganda were still given a positive result.
• Among patients testing negative, 30% in Nigeria and 7% in Uganda were given artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs).

Introduction
• Malaria remains endemic in both Uganda and Nigeria, over 80% of the population at risk of disease in either country.
• Both countries have recommended universal parasitological confirmation before treatment.
• Private sector plays a critical role in, where 40-60% of febrile cases seek care.
• In private outlets offering testing services, adherence to guidelines on negative case management remains unclear.

Methods
• Mystery patient surveys were conducted to understand provider’s case management following a negative test result.
• Consenting adults who were confirmed malaria negative using malaria rapid diagnostic tests (mRDTs) underwent training as mystery clients.
• Outlets known to be offering testing services were visited. Mystery clients ‘acted’ sick, describing symptoms likely to indicate suspected malaria thus leading the provider to conduct a malaria test.
• Visit experiences were later captured through an interviewer administered questionnaire.
• All outlet visits took place within seven days of initial screening test.

Results
• Surveys were conducted in December 2013 in Uganda and in November 2014 in Nigeria.
• In Nigeria, 131 visits were conducted by 63 mystery patients while 196 visits were conducted by 65 patients.
• In both countries, outlets visited were mainly clinics and drug shops.
• 75/131 (57%) and 74/176 (42%) of all tests were conducted using mRDT in Nigeria and Uganda respectively.

Survey data:
- **Nigeria:**
  - **131 visits**
  - **Not tested:** 0 (0%)
  - **Tested:** 131 (100%)
  - **Negative:** 78 (59.5%)
  - **Positive:** 53 (40.5%)
  - **ACTs:** 23 (29.5%)
  - **Antibiotics:** 12 (22.6%)
  - **Pyretics*: 20 (38.5%)
  - **Other:** 21 (38.6%)
  - **None:** 40 (51.2%)

- **Uganda:**
  - **196 visits**
  - **Not tested:** 17 (8.7%)
  - **Tested:** 179 (91.3%)
  - **Negative:** 114 (64.7%)
  - **Positive:** 62 (35.2%)
  - **ACTs:** 29 (16.1%)
  - **Antibiotics:** 12 (22.6%)
  - **Pyretics*: 28 (52.8%)
  - **Other:** 20 (37.7%)
  - **None:** 58 (50.8%)

One of the outlets (a clinic) that was visited in Uganda

Conclusion
• Evidence from the study suggests an alteration of negative results.
• Adherence to non-malaria case management is still sub optimal.
• There is need to further understand the factors driving anti malaria prescriptions despite negative results.

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Figure 1: Mystery patient case management in Nigeria
Figure 2: Mystery patient case management in Uganda

*These included both pyretics and analgesics.
A total of 50 received antimalarial, 24 received ACTs while 26 received other antimalarials.
The "Others" category mainly comprised of multivitamins.