Studies on the current status of malaria and its management practices in rural communities of southeast Nigeria

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**Background:** The effects of malaria are noticeable in rural areas where malaria frequently strikes during that period of the year when the need for agricultural work is greatest. In these areas, the health infrastructure is not sufficiently developed to ensure that an evolving favorable epidemiological situation is maintained. This study was undertaken:

- To assess the prevalence of malaria in different major locations of Onicha-Igbeze community and the practices adopted by the people in the management of malaria.

**Methods & Materials:** Thick blood films of 100 individuals in the community were used to determine the prevalence. A close ended questionnaire was also administered to 100 respondents in order to obtain information on malaria management practices of the people.

**Results:** The prevalence of malaria at major locations of the community was as follows: Amanator Primary school (68.2%), Onicha General Hospital (56.3%) and Afoudo market, Onicha (66.7%). The prevalence by age was found to be 1-10 (76.5%), 11-20 (54.5%), 21-30 (50%), 31-40 (57.1%), 41-50 (100%), 51 and above (66.7%). The prevalence by occupation was as follows: students (70%), civil servants (30%), Farmers (72%), and Traders (53.3%). Gender-wise, the males had a total prevalence of 67.9% while females had a total prevalence of 59.1%. The malaria management practices showed that 14% buy antimalarial drugs across the counter, 8% attends hospitals, 14% use traditional medicine from local healers. It was found that some individuals use more than one method in their management of malaria. Those who combined antimalarial drugs from shops with attendance to hospitals were found to be 16%, 12% combined antimalarial drugs from shops with traditional medicine from local healers, 10% combine attendance to hospitals and use of traditional medicine from local healers, 12% do the three management practices, while 14% reported doing nothing about malaria.

**Conclusion:** The fact that a good number of people buy antimalarials from shops calls for stronger commitment by various authorities to ensure that only genuine drugs are on our counters, and the observation that a good number of people use only traditional medicine from local healers to manage malaria calls for an in-depth basic and strategic research on this line of malaria management.

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