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The infrastructure of Ghanaian medicine outlets and its suitability to support public health initiatives and services for malaria control

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Background: Malaria is a major public health problem in Ghana, causing significant morbidity and mortality in pregnant women and children under five years of age. In order to assure the quality, safety and effectiveness of commodities, including medicines that are supplied for the prevention, management and control of malaria in medicine outlets, appropriate infrastructure and settings that conforms to acceptable standards for medicines management and supply practices/services are needed. The objective of this study was to assess the available infrastructure and settings in Ghanaian medicines outlets and its suitability to support public health initiatives and services for malaria control.

Methods: A cross section of the outlets (n=130) from hospitals/clinics and community-based retail outlets (community pharmacies and chemical shops) in Ashanti and Northern regions of Ghana were sampled. From these outlets, data were obtained to assess the available space, lighting, ventilation, tidiness and materials like insecticide treated bed nets stocked for the prevention and control of malaria. Data were also obtained on client confidentiality during patient counselling, and the type of records and reference materials maintained to optimize pharmaceutical and malaria control services. The data were obtained through observation of the outlets; review of records and reference literature, and through interview of the pharmaceutical staff incharge of the outlet.

Results: Eighty one percent of all the outlets (n=106) satisfied the general criteria for acceptable or good infrastructure and settings for pharmaceutical services. Fifty eight percent failed to meet the standards criteria for tidiness and 61% that of client confidentiality during counseling. More than half of all the outlets, including 34% of the community pharmacies, 42% of hospitals/clinics and 67% of licensed chemical shops had stock outs for insecticide treated bed nets. Generally, the community pharmacies had better infrastructure and settings for pharmaceutical services compared to the outlets in hospitals/clinics and the licensed chemical shops.

Conclusion: The basic infrastructure in most of the outlets assessed was satisfactory, but could be improved further with logistics and trained human resources to support appropriate safe and effective practices/services for malaria control.

Biography

Dr. Kwame Ohene Buabeng is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Clinical and Social Pharmacy of the Faculty of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences in the College of Health Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana. He holds a Bachelor degree in Pharmacy from KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana. MSc in Clinical Pharmacology from Aberdeen University, UK and PhD in Pharmacy (Social Pharmacy) from the University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland. His interest is in drug utilisation, health systems and pharmaceutical practice research. He is a reviewer for a number of refereed journals including Malaria journal, African Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology and the Journal of Public Health & Epidemiology. He is married and is blessed with five children.