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Use of oral rehydration therapy in the treatment of childhood diarrhoea in Douala, Cameroon.

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Introduction: The use of oral rehydration solutions in our context remains limited. This study was conducted to analyze the rate of this use in Douala, Cameroon and thereby determine the factors associated with it.

Method: A cross-sectional survey was administered to parents of children aged five years and younger during a six-month study period. The studied variables focused on the socio-demographic data of the population, data on diarrhoea and its severity, data on oral rehydration salts (ORS), and data related to other interventions for diarrhoea. The chi-square test was used to qualify associations between variables.

Results: Overall, 672 people agreed to participate in the study. Among them, 62.2% correctly defined diarrhoea. When their children develop diarrhoea, some of the parents (348, 51.8%) reported seeking hospital assistance before any intervention, while 225 parents (33.5%) preferred the use of ORS first. Four hundred seventy-five parents (70.7%) had heard of ORS and among them 313 (65.9%) had actually given ORS to their children as treatment during these children's most recent episodes of diarrhoea. Of the parents who had given their children ORS, 217 (69.3%) knew how to prepare it, and 122 (39.0%) knew how to administer it. One hundred thirty-five parents (20.1%) had administered metronidazole to treat their children's diarrhoea. The age of the children, the parents' level of education, and the number of children in the household significantly influenced the use or non-use of ORS (respectively, $p < 0.001$, $p = 0.003$ and $p < 0.0001$). Rehydration was correctly identified by 234 parents (34.8%) as the purpose of administering ORS.

Conclusion: The knowledge and the use of ORS in diarrhoea by the study sample was insufficient. The role of ORS was poorly known. Awareness campaigns can be carried out in order to improve the use of this effective intervention for diarrhea.

Biography

Essomba Noel Emmanuel is a public health doctor, senior lecturer at the university of Douala -Cameroon; director of a 2nd category hospital in Douala, Cameroon. His experience in the field of health promotion, he draws from his multiple responsibilities for more than 10 years, several times district health chief in semi-rural zone and director of hospitals, coordinator of the fight against AIDS during ten years, his work is regularly interested in the promotion of health and particularly that of mother and child.

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