

Publication

The fight against lymphatic filariasis: perceptions of community drug distributors during mass drug administration in coastal Kenya

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Lymphatic filariasis (LF), a neglected tropical disease (NTD) and leading cause of global disability, is endemic in 32 countries in Africa with almost 350 million people requiring regular drug administration, and only 16 countries achieving target coverage. Community Drug Distributors (CDDs) are critical for the success of NTD programs, and the distribution of medicines during mass drug administration (MDA) in Africa; however they could also be a weak link. The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe perceptions of CDDs during MDA for LF in Mvita sub-county in Mombasa county and Kaloleni sub-county in Kilifi county, Kenya; and provide recommendations for the effective engagement of communities and CDDs in low-resource settings.; In September 2018, we conducted six focus group discussions with community members in each sub-county, three with men aged 18-30, 31-50, and 51 years and above and three with women stratified into the same age groups. In each sub-county, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with nine community health extension workers (CHEWs), the national LF focal point, the county NTD focal points, and seven community leaders. Content analysis of the data was conducted, involving a process of reading, coding, and displaying data in order to develop a codebook.; We found that several barriers and facilitators impact the engagement between CDDs and community members during MDA. These barriers include poor communication and trust between CDDs and communities; community distrust of the federal government; low community knowledge and perceived risk of LF, poor timing of MDA, fragmented supervision of CDDs during MDA; and CDD bias when distributing medicines. We also found that CDD motivation was a critical factor in their ability to successfully meet MDA targets. It was acknowledged that directly observed treatment and adequate health education were often not executed by CDDs. The involvement of community leaders as informal supervisors of CDDs and community members improves MDA.; In order to achieve global targets around the elimination of LF, CDDs and communities must be effectively engaged by improving planning and implementation of MDA.

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