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Health-care-seeking behaviour for childhood illnesses in a resource-poor setting.

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Abstract

AIM: To determine health-care-seeking behaviour for childhood illnesses in a resource-poor setting.

METHOD: Cross-sectional survey was conducted in the children emergency room in a Nigerian tertiary hospital. Socio-demographic data and details of the place and type of care given to ill children before presentation in the tertiary hospital were obtained.

RESULTS: A total of 168 mother-child pairs were studied. The leading illnesses were characterised by fever (35.1%), cough (26.2%) and stooling (19.1%). Initial care was sought within homes (57.1%) and after 24 h of onset (61.9%). A significantly higher proportion of the mothers who sought care within 24 h did so within the homes ($P < 0.001$). Only 38.1% of the mothers felt that the illnesses were severe. Although 66.7% lived close to orthodox health facilities, only 50.6% utilized such orthodox health facilities. Care was mostly sought outside the homes from drug vendors (55.5%) and private clinics (25.0%). Overall, 72.2% of the mothers administered various drugs to their children before presentation. Home care mainly involved the use of drugs (52.1%) and herbal preparations (15.6%). Care was sought within 24 h of onset for children with fever compared with those with cough ($P < 0.001$) and stooling ($P < 0.001$). The leading reasons for not utilising orthodox health services at the onset of illnesses included non-recognition of the severe nature of the illness and poor finances.

CONCLUSION: Care-seeking for childhood illnesses was often delayed beyond 24 h, and most mothers sought care within homes. Health education is required to improve timely seeking of appropriate health care for childhood illnesses.

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MeSH Terms

LinkOut - more resources