

Congenital Heart Defect(CHD) “The Silent Crises”; The Need for New Innovative Ways to Save the Ghanaian Child - A Retrospective Study

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Abstract : Background: In a country of nearly 34 million people, Ghana suffers from rapidly growing pediatric CHD cases and not enough pediatric specialists to attend to the burgeoning needs of these children. Most of the cases are either missed or diagnosed late, resulting in increased mortality. According to the National Cardiothoracic Centre, 1 in every 100,000 births in Ghana has CHD; however, there is limited data on the clinical presentation and its management, one of the many reasons I decided to do this case study coupled with the loss my 2 month old niece to multiple Ventricular Septal Defect 3 years ago due late diagnoses. Method: A retrospective cohort study was performed at the child health clinic of one of Ghana’s public tertiary Institutions using data from their electronic health record (EHR) from February 2021 to April 2022. All suspected or provisionally diagnosed cases were included in the analysis. Results: Records of over 3000 children were reviewed with an approximate male to female ratio of 1:1.53 cases diagnosed during the period of study, most of whom were less than 5 years of age. 25 cases had complete clinical records, with acyanotic septal defects being the most diagnosed. 62.5% of the cases were ventricular septal defects, followed by Patent Ductus Arteriosus (23%) and Atrial Septal Defects (4.5%). Tetralogy of Fallot was the most predominant and complex cyanotic CHD with 10%. Conclusion: The indeterminate coronary anatomy of infants makes it difficult to use only echocardiography and other conventional clinical methods in screening for CHDs. There are rising modernizations and new innovative ways that can be employed in Ghana for early detection, hence preventing the delay of a potential surgical repair. It is, therefore, imperative to create the needed awareness about these “SILENT CRISES” and help save the Ghanaian child’s life.

Keywords : congenital heart defect(CHD), ventricular septal defect(VSD), atrial septal defect(ASD), patent ductus arteriosus(PDA)

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