

Missed Opportunities for Immunization of under Five Children in Calabar South County Cross River State, Nigeria, the Way Forward

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Abstract : Background; Immunization against the childhood killer diseases is the cardinal strategy for the prevention of these diseases all over the world in under five children, these diseases include; Tuberculosis, Measles, Polio, Tetanus, Diphthria, Pertusis, Yellow Fever, Hepatitis B, Haemophilus Influenza type B. 6.9 million children die before their fifth birthday, 80% of the world's death in children under 5 years occur in 25 countries most in Africa and Asia and 2 million children can be saved each year with routine immunization. Therefore failure to achieve total immunization coverage puts several children at risk. Aim; The aim of the study was to ascertain the prevalence, Investigate the various reasons and causes why several under five children in a suburb of Calabar municipal county fail to get the required immunizations as at and when due and possibly the consequences, so that efforts can be re-directed towards the solution of the problems so identified. Methods; the study was a community based cross sectional study. The respondents were the mothers/guardians of the sampled children who were all aged 0-59 months. To be eligible for recruitment into the study, the parent or guardian was required to give an informed consent, reside within the Calabar South County with his/her children aged 0-59 months. We calculated our sample size using the Leslie-Kish formula and we used a two-staged sampling method, first to ballot for the wards to be involved and then to select four of the most populated ones in the wards chosen. Data collection was by interviewer administered structured questionnaire (Appendix I), Data collected was entered and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. Percentages were calculated and represented using charts and tables Results; The number of children sampled was 159. We found that 150 were fully immunized and 9 were not, the prevalence of missed opportunity was 32% from the study. The reasons for missed opportunities were varied, ranging from false contraindications, logistical problems resulting in very poor access roads to health facilities and poor organization of health centers together with negative health worker attitudes. Some of the consequences of these missed opportunities were increased susceptibility to vaccine preventable diseases, resurgence of the above diseases and increased morbidity and mortality of children aged less than 5 years. Conclusion; We found that ignorance on the part of both parents/guardians and health care staff together with infrastructural inadequacies in the county such as- roads, poor electric power supply for storage of vaccines were hugely responsible for most missed opportunities for immunization. The details of these and suggestions for improvement and the way forward are discussed.

Keywords : missed opportunity, immunization, under five, Calabar south

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