

Strategy for Enhancement of Malaria Vaccine Awareness, Acceptance and Uptake for Children Under 5 years in the South West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract:

Background: Despite significant progress in malaria control, awareness and uptake of the newly introduced malaria vaccine remains suboptimal among children under five years. This study aimed to develop strategies to enhance malaria vaccine awareness and uptake in the South West Region of Cameroon, serving as a model for national scale-up.

Methods: A Qualitative-study approach was employed to explore mothers/caregivers awareness, perceptions, efficacy of malaria vaccine to children below 5 years and their associated factors as well as other factors linked to the implementation of the vaccine roll out. Data were collected from mothers/caregivers focus group discussions. Findings informed the design of an adaptable strategy to enhance malaria vaccine awareness, uptake and ensure sustainability.

Results: Awareness of the malaria vaccine among mothers was generally high in urban areas but limited in depth, with frequent confusion between vaccination and other malaria prevention methods. Confusion was partly due to overlapping health messages at antenatal clinics and during routine child immunization visits. In rural settings, awareness remained uneven yet trust in health workers strongly promoted acceptance and uptake. Also, perceived efficacy that vaccinated children

experience milder malaria and recover faster contributed to an extend in strengthening acceptance and community-level advocacy in rural settings.

Conclusion: Findings informed the development of a Key strategies for Optimizing Malaria Vaccine awareness and uptake integrating community engagement, behavioral change communication, targeted health education, community-tailored communication, use of visual and electronic tools and use of trusted community agents versed with the people

Keywords:

Malaria vaccine, Vaccine uptake, Health systems, Cameroon, Key strategies, Immunization, Community engagement.