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### Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Utilization of Paediatric Health Services at the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Nigeria

*Effet de la Pandémie de COVID-19 sur l'Utilisation des Services de Santé Pédiatriques au Centre Médical Fédéral, Asaba, Nigeria*

<sup>1</sup>B. U. Ezeonwu, <sup>1</sup>C. O. Okike, <sup>1</sup>K. A. Adeniran, <sup>1</sup>E. E. Omoyibo, <sup>1</sup>E. Onyeka-Okite, <sup>1</sup>H. I. Opara, <sup>1</sup>U. C. Ajanwenyi Joseph, <sup>1</sup>O. M. Uwadia, <sup>1\*</sup>A. A. Okolo

#### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES:** Corona virus disease was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 and it precipitated unprecedented and devastating crisis on non-COVID hospital visits in almost all the countries within the globe, with a downward slide in the number of paediatric consultations and emergency admissions. Thus, we assessed the utilization of services offered in the department of Paediatrics and the observed mortality rates in comparison to similar non-pandemic period.

**METHODS:** This study was carried out in the department of Pediatrics, Federal Medical Center Asaba. All the admissions at the children's ward and emergency, then visits at clinics and the immunization center were reviewed using a consecutive sampling method from April 2019 to September 2019 (pre COVID-19) and April 2020 to September 2020 (during COVID-19 pandemic).

**RESULTS:** The total number of vaccines given in the immunization clinic was higher during the pre-COVID-19 period, so also the number of clinic visits. There was a decline in admission by 68.2% from the pre-COVID period to the pandemic period and this decline was across all age groups and gender. Also, a 60.8% increase in mortality was observed during the COVID-19 period and mortality pattern showed no gender difference across both study periods.

**CONCLUSION:** There was a decline in the utilization of health services at the Department of Paediatrics, Federal Medical Center Asaba, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a rise in mortality, despite the fact that all the units of the department were fully operational within the period of pandemic. *WAJM* 2023; 40(3): 292–297.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Covid-19, Children, Mortality, Clinic, Admission, Health services, Effect, Utilization.

#### RÉSUMÉ

**CONTEXTE ET OBJECTIFS:** La maladie à virus Corona a été déclarée pandémie mondiale en mars 2020 et a précipité une crise sans précédent et dévastatrice sur les visites hospitalières non COVID dans presque tous les pays du globe, avec une baisse du nombre de consultations pédiatriques et d'admissions d'urgence. Nous avons donc évalué l'utilisation des services offerts dans le département de pédiatrie et les taux de mortalité observés par rapport à une période non pandémique similaire.

**MÉTHODES:** Cette étude a été réalisée dans le département de pédiatrie du Centre médical fédéral d'Asaba. Toutes les admissions au service pédiatrique et aux urgences, puis les visites dans les cliniques et au centre de vaccination ont été examinées selon une méthode d'échantillonnage consécutif d'avril 2019 à septembre 2019 (avant COVID-19) et d'avril 2020 à septembre 2020 (pendant la pandémie de COVID-19).

**RÉSULTATS:** Le nombre total de vaccins administrés dans le centre de vaccination était plus élevé pendant la période pré-COVID-19, de même que le nombre de visites au centre. Le nombre d'admissions a diminué de 68,2 % entre la période pré-COVID et la période pandémique, et cette baisse a concerné tous les groupes d'âge et tous les sexes. Par ailleurs, une augmentation de 60,8 % de la mortalité a été observée au cours de la période COVID-19 et le schéma de mortalité n'a montré aucune différence entre les sexes au cours des deux périodes d'étude.

**CONCLUSION:** Il y a eu une baisse de l'utilisation des services de santé au département de pédiatrie du Federal Medical Center Asaba pendant la pandémie de COVID-19, avec une augmentation de la mortalité, malgré le fait que toutes les unités du département étaient pleinement opérationnelles pendant la période de la pandémie. *WAJM* 2023; 40(3): 292–297.

**Mots-clés:** Pandémie, Covid-19, Enfants, Mortalité, Clinique, Admission, Services de santé, Effet, Utilisation.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Paediatrics, Federal Medical Centre, Asaba, Nigeria.

\*Correspondence: Prof. Angela Anene Okolo, Department of Paediatrics, Federal Medical Center, Asaba, Nigeria. Email: aneneolisa@gmail.com

Abbreviations: ASB, Asaba; CHER, Children's Emergency Room; CHOP, Children Out Patient; FMC, Federal Medical Centre; NCDC, Nigeria Centre For Disease Control.