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### An Evaluation of the Knowledge and Utilization of the Essential Medicines List among Health Professionals in Six Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

*Une Evaluation de la Connaissance et de l'Utilisation de la Liste des Medicaments Essentiels Parmi les Professionnels de la Sante Dans Six Institutions Tertiaires au Nigeria*

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#### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** The introduction and operationalization of the Essential Medicines (EM) concept remains a major achievement of the WHO. This study assessed the current knowledge, utilization, and perception of the Essential Medicines programme in Nigeria.

**METHODS:** This was a cross-sectional study conducted across six tertiary health institutions in Southern Nigeria from January to July 2018. A total of 750 semi-structured questionnaires were administered to doctors, pharmacists, and nurses. The information sought included the demographic characteristics of respondents, knowledge of definition of the essential medicines concept, date of launch at the national level, current edition, current use, the advantages and disadvantages of the EM List (EML). The data were analyzed qualitatively and presented descriptively as means (SD) and percentage frequencies.

**RESULTS:** A total of 748 respondents (487 doctors, 208 nurses, and 53 pharmacists) participated in the study. Healthcare professionals' (HCP) knowledge of the EM concept and list was poor (15%), as determined by their ability to define or describe the concept of the EML, with less than 3% of respondents aware of the current edition of the EML in use in Nigeria. Less than 20% of all respondents used the EML during their internship, with nurses using it the least and only 8% using it during their first year of practice. Over 70% of respondents could not identify notable advantages of the EML and only 14.6% agreed that the program had been successful in Nigeria.

**CONCLUSION:** The initial global momentum following the introduction of the EM program appears to have declined with the new generation of HCPs, likely due to lack of educational reinforcement. This negatively impacts the drug use scenario within our healthcare system. **WAJM 2023; 40(6): 575–580.**

**Keywords:** Essential medicines; Essential drugs; Health care professionals; Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice (KAP); World Health Organization (WHO); Nigeria.

#### RÉSUMÉ

**CONTEXTE:** L'introduction et l'opérationnalisation du concept de médicaments essentiels (ME) restent une réalisation majeure de l'OMS. Cette étude évalue la connaissance, l'utilisation et la perception actuelles du programme des médicaments essentiels au Nigeria.

**METHODES:** Il s'agissait d'une étude transversale menée dans six établissements de santé tertiaires du sud du Nigeria de janvier à juillet 2018. Au total, 750 questionnaires semi-structurés ont été administrés aux médecins, pharmaciens et infirmiers. Les informations recherchées comprenaient les caractéristiques démographiques, la définition du concept de médicaments essentiels, la date de lancement au niveau national, l'édition actuelle, l'utilisation actuelle, les avantages et les inconvénients de la liste des ME (LME). Les données ont été analysées de manière qualitative et présentées de manière descriptive sous forme de moyenne (SD) et de pourcentage de fréquences.

**RESULTATS:** Un total de 748 répondants (487 médecins, 208 infirmiers et 53 pharmaciens) ont participé à l'étude. Les connaissances des professionnels de santé (PSS) sur le concept et la liste des LME étaient faibles (15%), comme le montre leur capacité à définir, fournir ou décrire le concept de LME, avec moins de 3% des répondants connaissant l'édition actuelle de la LME utilisée au Nigeria. Moins de 20% de tous les répondants ont utilisé l'EML pendant leur stage, les infirmières étant celles qui l'ont le moins utilisé, avec seulement 8% l'utilisant pendant leur première année de pratique. Plus de 70% des répondants n'ont pas pu identifier d'avantages notables de l'EML, et seulement 14,6% étaient d'accord pour dire que le programme a été une réussite au Nigeria.

**CONCLUSION:** L'élan initial qui a suivi l'introduction du programme d'EM semble avoir diminué avec la nouvelle génération de HCP, probablement en raison du manque de renforcement éducatif. Cela a un impact négatif sur le scénario d'utilisation des médicaments au sein de notre système de santé. **WAJM 2023; 40(6): 575–580.**

**Mots-clés:** Médicaments essentiels; Médicaments essentiels; Professionnels de la santé; Connaissances, Attitudes, Pratiques (KAP); Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS); Nigeria.

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Abbreviations: EML, Essential Medicines List; EMLc, Essential Medicines List Children; HCP, Health Care Professional; RLS, Resource-Limited Settings; WHO, World Health Organization.