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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION	IC
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS	1F
EDITORIAL NOTE: Strengthening Health Systems Toward the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases and other Health Challenges - Gregory Erhabor	1
Unmet Need for Care of Older Persons in our Healthcare System Oladipupo O. Fakoya, Ogugua Osi-Ogbu, Temitope O. Olajubu	3
ORIGINAL ARTICLES	
First and Second Waves of Covid-19: A Comparative Study of the Clinical Presentation and Outcome among Hospitalized Patients in Lagos Nigeria	7
O. A. Adejumo, S. Adesola, B. I. Adebayo, W. B. Mutiu, I. A. Abdus-Salam, B. A. Saka, T. Ogunniyan, O. D. Oladokun, O. B. Oluwadun, J. O. Bamidele, A. V. Adetola, O. A. Osundaro, F. O. Ogunsakin, E. B. Agbana, T. Femi-Adebayo, O. M. Oyadotun, A. Bowale	
Knowledge and Practice of the Referral System under the National Health Insurance Scheme among Medical and Dental Practitioners of A Large-Accredited Facility in Kano, Nigeria	16
G. C. Michael, A. U. Gajida, B. A. Grema, I. S. Abubakar, I. Aliyu, K. U. Omeje, I. M. Inuwa, A. Ajiya, M. S. Kurawa, M. A. Ramalan, S. T. Tanimu, A. K. Suleiman	
Assessment of Right Ventricular Systolic Function using Tricuspid Annular Plane Systolic Excursion (TAPSE) among HIV Patients on HAART and Its Relationship with Viral Load and CD4 Cell Count	25
M. M. Baba, F. Buba, M. A. Talle, M. A. Garbati, Habu Abdul	
Kidney Function in Hypertensive Patients with Left Ventricular Hypertrophy	30
I. N. Mba, B. Basil, B. Myke-Mbata, O. A. Olayanju, A. Faleye, S. A. Adebisi	
Exposure History, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Use, and Clinical Characteristics of Human Rabies Cases: A Twelve-Year Retrospective Review at a Tertiary Facility in Ghana	36
P. Puplampu, A. A. Asare, N. A. H Seneadza V. J. Ganu	
Influence of Adhesive Incise Drape Use on Surgical Site Infection Rates in Contaminated and Dirty Abdominal Operations	42
A. A. Adeleke, O. Olasehinde, A. O. Adisa	
Haematological Indices and Iron Status in Pre-Dialysis Chronic Kidney Disease Patients	48
I. R. Edeki, E. I. Unuigbe, E. I. Okaka	
Compliance With Guidelines on Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention in Kwara State, Northcentral Nigeria	55
C. O. Agomo, E. Shekarau, N. C. Ogbulafor, N. Abdullahi, B Oyetunji, C Okoronkwo, P. Uhomoihi, O. A. Mokuolu	
Relationship between Lifestyle Indicators and Un-investigated Dyspepsia Among Adult Patients in a Primary Care Setting in Northern Nigeria	65
B. B. Fatusin, A. J. Fatusin, B. A. Grema, O. T. Lewechi-Uke, A. Abubarkar, S. Apanisile, M. Baura, Z. Dannina	
Risk Factors of Metabolic Syndrome among Normal Weight Adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria	74
O. A.. Moronkola, E. E, Oyenusi, A. O. Oduwole, U. A. Sanni	
CASE REPORT	
Intrathoracic Transposition of a Pedicled Latissimus Dorsi Muscle Flap for Complicated Chronic Empyema Thoracis: A Plea for its Popularity in our Subregion	82
I. I. Alioke, V. T. Ayongo	
Differential Clubbing and a Triad of Patent Ductus Arteriosus, Ventricular Septal Defect and Supravalvular Ring Mitral Stenosis: A Case Report	87
C. O. Osagie, Okechukwu S. Ogah, Akinyemi Aje, A, A. Adebisi, A. M. Adeoye, O. O. Oladapo, B. E. Adebayo	
Typhoid Fever Presenting with Ileal Perforation and Gastric Perforation	92
M. M. Muhammed, K. J. Bwala, J. O. Okoruwa	
Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Supraglottis Presenting as Hoarseness	97
Tobe Momah, Olusegun Lijofi	
MISCELLANEOUS	
Beyond the Shadows: Strengthening Nigeria's Health System in the Wake of Lassa Fever and Covid-19 Challenges	100
E. A. Tobin, O. I. Edeawe, S. Abah	
INDEX TO VOLUME 41, NO. 1, 2024	
Author Index	104
Subject Index	105



Exposure History, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Use, and Clinical Characteristics of Human Rabies Cases: A Twelve-Year Retrospective Review at a Tertiary Facility in Ghana

Histoire de l'Exposition, Utilisation de la Prophylaxie Post-Exposition, et Caractéristiques Cliniques des Cas de Rage Humaine: Une Revue Rétrospective de Douze Ans dans un Établissement Tertiaire au Ghana

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Robust monitoring and reporting systems for rabies are lacking thus increasing the risk of under reporting. Highlighting the rabies cases brings to bear the needed urgent attention for more efforts at preventing and controlling the disease.

OBJECTIVE: To describe the epidemiological characteristics of patients managed for clinical rabies at the largest referral facility in Ghana.

METHODS: A retrospective single-center hospital-based chart review and data extraction were conducted for persons managed for clinical rabies infection at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital from January 2008 to December 2019. Data analysis was done using STATA. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the epidemiological and clinical characteristics. Fisher's exact test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and Spearman's correlation coefficient were used to explore significant associations.

RESULTS: A total of 28 cases were recorded over the period of review. All of them died and most (68%) of them were males. Twenty-one percent of them were less than 15 years old. Their median age interquartile range (IQR) was 31 years (25.5 years) and the median incubation period for rabies (IQR) was 60 days (60 days). The source of rabies for cases was mainly dog bites. The vaccination status of all the animals could not be ascertained. Majority (80%) of the patients took neither anti-rabies vaccine nor immunoglobulin as post-exposure prophylaxis after the dog bite. The median time of admission before death (interquartile range) was 2 days (2 days). Majority (82%) of the cases were furious rabies.

CONCLUSION: Attention should be directed at mass vaccination of dogs as dog bites are common. Ensuring availability and access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is also critical in averting rabies-related deaths. **WAJM 2024; 41 (1): 36 - 41.**

KEYWORDS: Rabies, dog bite, post-exposure, prophylaxis, mass vaccination.

RÉSUMÉ

CONTEXTE: Des systèmes de surveillance et de déclaration robustes pour la rage font défaut, augmentant ainsi le risque de sous-déclaration. Mettre en lumière les cas de rage suscite l'attention urgente nécessaire pour redoubler d'efforts dans la prévention et le contrôle de la maladie.

OBJECTIF: Décrire les caractéristiques épidémiologiques des patients traités pour une rage clinique dans le plus grand établissement de référence au Ghana.

MÉTHODES: Une revue rétrospective des dossiers médicaux et une extraction de données basées à l'hôpital ont été réalisées pour les personnes traitées pour une infection à la rage clinique à l'Hôpital d'Enseignement Korle-Bu de janvier 2008 à décembre 2019. L'analyse des données a été effectuée à l'aide de STATA. Des statistiques descriptives ont été utilisées pour résumer les caractéristiques épidémiologiques et cliniques. Le test exact de Fisher, le test de Kruskal-Wallis et le coefficient de corrélation de Spearman ont été utilisés pour explorer les associations significatives.

RÉSULTATS: Un total de 28 cas ont été enregistrés sur la période examinée. Tous sont décédés et la plupart d'entre eux (68%) étaient des hommes. Vingt et un pour cent d'entre eux avaient moins de 15 ans. Leur âge médian (plage interquartile) était de 31 ans (25,5 ans) et la période d'incubation médiane de la rage (plage interquartile) était de 60 jours (60 jours). La principale source de rage pour les cas était principalement les morsures de chiens. Le statut vaccinal de tous les animaux n'a pas pu être déterminé. La majorité (80%) des patients n'ont pris ni vaccin antirabique ni immunoglobuline en prophylaxie post-exposition après la morsure de chien. Le délai médian d'admission avant le décès (plage interquartile) était de 2 jours (2 jours). La majorité (82%) des cas étaient atteints de rage furieuse.

CONCLUSION: L'attention devrait être dirigée vers la vaccination de masse des chiens car les morsures de chien sont courantes. Assurer la disponibilité et l'accès à la prophylaxie post-exposition (PPE) est également crucial pour éviter les décès liés à la rage.

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MOTS-CLÉS: Rage, morsure de chien, post-exposition, prophylaxie, vaccination de masse

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Abbreviations: PEP: Post Exposure Prophylaxis; KBTH: Korle Bu Teaching Hospital