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Climate change and Force Majeure on Childhood Oncology Services in a Low Resource Setting: Experience from a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria

Changement climatique et cas de force majeure dans les services d'oncologie pédiatrique dans un contexte de ressources limitées : expérience d'un établissement tertiaire au Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Childhood cancer patients are a vulnerable population who are adversely affected by any disaster that disrupts the healthcare ecosystem. The objective of this study was to describe the impact of flooding on access to care for childhood cancer patients in Bayelsa state, southern Nigeria. We review the effect of the 2022 flooding on childhood cancer care at the paediatric oncology unit of the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital, southern Nigeria. The devastating floods caused closure of the health facility for four weeks. The challenges faced by the oncology patients included inability to access the facility due to destruction of roads and telecommunication networks, inaccessibility to chemotherapy drugs, postponement of surgeries, parental financial constraints due to income loss occasioned by the flood and worsened by inadequate health insurance. Two children, who were undergoing chemotherapy for rhabdomyosarcoma and retinoblastoma had their care transferred to an unaffected secondary care facility 24km away. Through teamwork and determination, the oncology team was able to overcome various obstacles to provide uninterrupted care for the patients and improve on future patient care during disasters. Care for childhood cancer patients should be prioritized by healthcare facilities especially in predictable flood prone areas like Bayelsa state. Emphasis should be on disaster preparedness training, development of outstations equipped with patient information, chemotherapy drugs and other requirements for continued care to prevent adverse childhood cancer care outcomes. **WAJM 2023; 40(10); 1067-1071.**

Keywords: childhood, cancer, flooding, force majeure

RÉSUMÉ

Les patients atteints de cancer pédiatrique constituent une population vulnérable fortement touchée par toute catastrophe perturbant l'écosystème de soins de santé. L'objectif de cette étude était de décrire l'impact des inondations sur l'accès aux soins des patients atteints de cancer pédiatrique dans l'État de Bayelsa, dans le sud du Nigeria. Nous examinons l'effet des inondations de 2022 sur les soins du cancer pédiatrique à l'unité d'oncologie pédiatrique de l'Hôpital universitaire de la Niger Delta, dans le sud du Nigeria. Les inondations dévastatrices ont entraîné la fermeture de l'établissement de santé pendant quatre semaines. Les défis auxquels sont confrontés les patients en oncologie comprennent l'incapacité d'accéder aux installations en raison de la destruction des routes et des réseaux de télécommunication, l'inaccessibilité aux médicaments de chimiothérapie, le report des interventions chirurgicales, des contraintes financières parentales en raison de la perte de revenus causée par les inondations et aggravées par une assurance maladie insuffisante. par le manque d'assurance maladie. Deux enfants, qui suivaient une chimiothérapie pour un rhabdomyosarcome et un rétinoblastome, ont vu leurs soins transférés vers un établissement de soins secondaires non affecté à 24 km de là. Grâce au travail d'équipe et à la détermination, l'équipe d'oncologie a réussi à surmonter les différents obstacles pour assurer des soins ininterrompus aux patients et améliorer les soins futurs aux patients en cas de catastrophes. Les soins aux patients atteints de cancer pédiatrique devraient être une priorité pour les établissements de santé, en particulier dans les zones sujettes aux inondations prévisibles comme l'État de Bayelsa. L'accent devrait être mis sur la formation à la préparation aux catastrophes, le développement de postes extérieurs équipés d'informations sur les patients, de médicaments de chimiothérapie et d'autres éléments nécessaires pour assurer des soins continus, afin de prévenir des résultats défavorables dans les soins de l'enfance atteinte de cancer. **WAJM 2023; 40(10); 1067-1071.**

Mots-clés : enfance, cancer, inondations, force majeure

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ABBREVIATIONS

LGA: Local Government Area, LMICs: Low- and middle-income countries, NDUTH: Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital