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Abstract (oral session)

Abuse of antimalarial drugs in treatment of febrile patients with clinically diagnosed malaria in Bushenyi District, Uganda

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Background: Malaria morbidity and mortality in Uganda continue to escalate despite standard prevention and control measures currently in-place. Whereas prompt and accurate laboratory diagnosis of malaria is the key to the effective management of malaria, clinical syndromic diagnosis has been the most widely used in Uganda and other resource poor countries. **Objective:** To determine the incidence of anti-malarial drug abuse among patients clinically diagnosed with malaria in Bushenyi, Uganda. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was undertaken at outpatient departments of ten health center (IIs) in Bushenyi, Uganda between April and June, 2011. Rapid diagnostic Test for malaria parasites was performed on recruited 217 female patients (66.2%) and 111 male patients (33.8%) who were clinically diagnosed with malaria. Fifteen health workers at the ten participating health centre IIs were interviewed on criteria used to prescribe anti-malarial drugs and ten key informants interviewed on how they perceived being treated without laboratory results. Rapid diagnostic test were used for the malaria test **Results:** All (100%) health workers found in the 10 participating health Centre IIs in Bushenyi district were aware of the new policy of routine malaria laboratory diagnosis of all malaria case suspects, but they were all still using the presumptive treatment of malaria basing on clinical signs and symptoms because they had no access to laboratory services. Anti-malarial drugs were wrongly prescribed for febrile patients in 93.6% of the total time malaria was diagnosed in the health centers. Thus this study shows that antimalarial drugs were correctly administered to febrile patients in 6.4% of the total time malaria fever were suspected confirming the fact that 93.6% of the febrile patients who received malaria drugs simply abused it because they had no malaria disease. **Conclusions and Recommendations:** Anti-malarial drugs are being abused in health centre IIs in Bushenyi district due to poor diagnostic resources One way to reduce irrational use of the expensive artemisin based combination therapies is by embracing Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDT) for malaria by those health workers who do not have access to laboratory microscopy.