

Cameroonians' cross-views on the malaria vaccine for children aged 0-5 years

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1. Introduction

Malaria disease is caused by the *Plasmodium* parasites. It is transmitted to human beings through the bite of infected mosquitos. It is not contagious – can be transmitted directly from one person to another (Mendo & Bilong Nguidjol, 2018).

In 2023, Cameroon recorded 4 850 510 suspected cases. More than one million were classified as serious cases with 32% for children under the age of 5 years (National Malaria Control Programme). Malaria is the first cause of morbidity – 3800 deaths in 2021 – and infant mortality, despite many efforts made against this disease (Oms, 2024).

Recently, the Government has launched a national campaign to vaccinate massively this target population. So, this paper expects to explore the perspective of vaccination by the view of parents in Cameroonian context.

2. Materials and method

This qualitative research work has been done by the use of observation and interviews among 30 parents with children between 0 to 5 years. The step of data gathering was realized in urban area particularly in Bafoussam, Douala and Yaounde.

This anthropological study was used a comprehensive approach based on the interpretation of opinions.

3. Results

3.1. What is malaria?

According to many opinions collected from the field, it emerges that the majority of the interviewees know the existence, the symptoms and the consequences of the disease. As a reminder, malaria is not directly transmissible disease. A responder defines:

Informants are also aware about the symptoms of malaria:

“It's a disease presenting with prominent signs and symptoms such as Fever, Joint Pains, and Anorexia” (Mother of 2 children, Yaounde).

3.2. Malaria vaccine in Cameroon: welcome or unwelcome?

After the consolidation of data, the essence of parents has heard about the malaria vaccine from different sources such as: radios, televisions, Social Medias, Ministry of Public health, hospitals, etc. However, the majority of parents have a negative perception of that vaccine although some cases of acceptance.

Many parents “do not see the utility” (Father of 5 children, Bafoussam) of the malaria vaccine while another asked: “How can you [Government] vaccinate in an unhealthy environment?” (Father of 3 children, Douala).

3.3. Treatments of malaria among citizens

Despite an intensive campaign for the new Malaria vaccine, many Cameroonians prefer to treat malaria through traditional methods. An informant described his heritage infusion: “[...] my mum used to make me a mixture of papaya leaves + mango bark + papaya roots and lots of other barks” (Father of 1 child, Douala).

4. Discussion

The results from the field show that many parents do not want to vaccinate their children mainly because of the number of doses to be administered to the child – at least 4 doses (Oms, 2024). With this “exaggeration” of this medication, they fear the long-term side effects of vaccines on their children. Subsequently, they prefer to use traditional technic to heal malaria and also to try products from local researchers such as an *endogenous larvicide* (Ntoumba, 2021).

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study shows that Cameroonian parents have largely heard about the new malaria vaccine even though many parents do not approve its use for many reasons. This research is a contribution on the study of *vaccino-scepticism* in the world.

6. Bibliography

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