

Quality Medicine Use for Children in Uganda (ChildMed)

Institutions in charge of project:

- Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Copenhagen
- Child Health and Development Centre, Makerere University

Project description:

The overall objective of this multidisciplinary project is to provide research to improve the quality of medicine use and management for children in Uganda and to strengthen research capacity through research and research training.

The project will

- determine policies of relevance to children's medicine use and map supply systems for medicines for children
- examine existing diagnoses and alternative differential diagnoses for selected diseases in children
- determine the availability of appropriate formulations and dosage forms and to explore the accessibility and acceptability of medicines for children
- explore children's use of medicines, medication practices and the meaning of medicines in the every-day lives of children and their caretakers
- examine existing forms of communication with and about children's use and management of medicines
- develop a policy framework and policy recommendations with respect to children and medicines
- build research capacity at individual and institutional level.

The use of medicines is an important aspect of child health. However, this topic has been sparsely dealt with in international research, not least in low-income societies. There seems to be an assumption that children are 'small adults' and, hence, can be medicated with adult medicines and in dosages according to weight; yet adult medicines may be harmful given that children's organs are not fully developed.

With very high morbidity and mortality rates, children account for a large need of medicine consumption. However, there are no public statistics on medicine utilisation by children and the use of medicines for children has been sparsely researched in Uganda.

Ugandan children suffer disproportionately from parasitic infections, respiratory diseases, and a range of other acute and chronic conditions. In young children, disease and malnutrition exacerbate each other. For these problems children are treated in the composite health system, which includes often understaffed and under-resourced public health facilities, small private clinics and drug shops, and in their homes. Diagnoses and treatment are often inappropriate and some children receive too much medicine, some too little, and many are treated presumptively. Poverty contributes to morbidity and mortality, but family endeavours to care for sick children also contribute to impoverishment since many families use large sums of money on (often inappropriate and unnecessary) medicines.

Our hypothesis is that appropriate medicinal treatment depends on four key dimensions: coherency of policies relevant to children's medicine use; accurate diagnostic procedures; availability and adequate use of appropriate medicines; and effective communication of perceptions and knowledge. These dimensions will be explored through case studies of four contrasting medication scenarios: Acute respiratory diseases, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS and worms.

The project activities fall in three phases: Inception phase; operational research; finalisation.

The project field work primarily takes place in the Jinja District although some data are collected in Kampala and elsewhere.

Outputs of the project comprise 4 Ugandan Masters degrees, 4 Ugandan PhD degrees, 2 completed Ugandan post-docs, policy briefs, several scientific papers and a book.

Partner institutions:

University of Copenhagen

- Faculty of Life Sciences
- Faculty of Social Sciences
- Faculty of Health Sciences

Makerere University, Kampala

- Child Health and Development Center
- Department of Pharmacology
- Department of Paediatrics, University College of Health Sciences
- School of Public Health
- Department of Social Work and Social Administration

Mulago Hospital, Kampala

- Pediatric Neurologist Department

Ministry of Health, Uganda

- Dept. Community Health

Project team:

Danish participants:

Ebba Holme Hansen, professor, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Copenhagen (project coordinator, Danish responsible partner)

Annette Olsen, senior researcher, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen (administrator)

Susan R. Whyte, professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Copenhagen

Marianne S. Østergaard, GP, senior researcher, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen

Ugandan participants:

Anne R. Katahoire, director, Child Health and Development Center (CHDC), Makerere University, (Ugandan responsible partner)

Jessica S. Jitta, senior researcher, CHDC (coordinator)

Augustine Mutumba, senior administrative assistant, CHDC

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Justus S. Byarugaba, Pediatric Neurologist Department, Mulago Hospital, Kampala

James K. Tumwine, professor, Department of Paediatrics, University College of Health Sciences, Makerere University

Fred Nuwaha, associate professor, School of Public Health, Makerere University

David Kyaddondo, lecturer, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Makerere University

Anthony K. Mbonye, head, Dept. Community Health, Ministry of Health

Focal point in Jinja:

TBA, District Health Officer, Jinja District.

Project start and end: 2010-2014

Budget: DKK 11.3 M

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