

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Welcome to the current edition of Tropical Journal of Health Sciences. The journal has continued to be global in terms of the distribution of article, not only in Nigeria but also across Africa. The first article is a narrative review of the prevalence, causes and consequences of child marriage status in Nigeria using literature searches of peer-reviewed articles published between 1990 and 2017 from various databases. Child marriage is still prevalent in Nigeria, especially in the northern parts of the country. Reasons for child marriage in Nigeria include poverty; gender inequity; traditions and customs; weak legislative and institutional structures; and conflict and political instability. Child marriage has been found to have negative impacts on the children's education, health, as well as on their dignity and integrity. Authors suggested that holistic, multi-sectoral strategy is needed in order to put an end to child marriage in Nigeria, as well as raising awareness, encouraging behavioral change, and ensuring the implementation of the laws and policies that prohibit child marriage by the government of Nigeria. In addition, empowering girls with increased access to quality education, life building skills, economic support and supporting networks for affected girls cannot be overemphasized.

The article from Zimbabwe discussed the effect of diarrhea on morbidity and mortality of children, using data from the 2015 Zimbabwe demographic health survey. Paradoxically, diarrhoea has continued to be one of the major underlying factors to childhood morbidity and mortality globally, and specifically in developing countries. In Zimbabwe, despite the reported prevalence of diarrhoea, there is a lacuna of scholarly inquisition of the background and proximate predictors of childhood diarrhoea and gap was filled by this study. The study recommends the identification of diarrhoea as a significant contributor to childhood morbidity and mortality by the government, relevant stakeholders and implementation partners. Such recognition would lead to the designing and implementation of disease control strategies that reduce unhygienic practices in risk groups and provinces, educate communities on the benefits of diarrhoea awareness and girl child empowerment.

Another study assessed knowledge, awareness and seroprevalence of Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) among women in an urban district, Southern Nigeria. The low level of HBV knowledge and awareness in this study is suggestive of poor public awareness of HBV. For effective HBV prevention and control in Nigeria, there is the need for increased health promotion campaigns against HBV. Early diagnosis is important to prevent secondary liver cirrhosis from prolonged cholestasis.

Obstructive jaundice (OJ) poses a big problem for the general surgeon because he needs to effectively manage the primary cause of the OJ along with the problems of cholestasis. This was discussed in an article from University of Ilorin, Teaching Hospital which looked into the outcome of 25 cases with this condition. OJ remains a huge burden in this setting and it is associated with a high morbidity and mortality. The high rate of post laparotomy mortality suggests that an alternate means of biliary bypass in patients with advanced unresectable disease, other than routine laparotomy, should be encouraged.

Commencement of antenatal care early enough in pregnancy is to ensure a successful outcome for the mother and the child. Oral health status has been shown to influence various diseases, including pregnancy outcome. A study reported in this edition determined the knowledge and perception of antenatal nurses regarding the oral health of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and their babies. Only 25% knew that there is a relationship between periodontal diseases and adverse pregnancy outcome. Ninety-five percent of them were willing to increase their oral health knowledge. Most participants had an inadequate knowledge of maternal and child oral health and will benefit from oral health education.

Literature is scanty on the risk factors for diabetic retinopathy in Nigeria. The next article attempted to identify the risk factors for diabetic retinopathy among patients in Ilorin. Diabetes mellitus increases the risk of eye diseases. They conclude that: longer disease duration, glycosuria, proteinuria and micro-albuminuria were significantly associated with diabetic retinopathy. However, age, gender, type of diabetes, age at diagnosis of diabetes, degree of glycaemic control, serum lipids, systemic hypertension, obesity, presence of kidney disease and leg wound were not risk factors of retinopathy.

Fibroadenoma of the breast is a frequent diagnosis encountered at breast imaging. The need to pay attention to the presence of atypical findings in breast ultrasonography was emphasized in the last article. This is important in view of its association with breast cancer risk, which would warrant patient follow-up. High-resolution ultrasound is useful in defining the tumor margin, echotexture, intra-tumoral lesions like cysts and calcifications. However, in authors view, where there is a diagnostic challenge due to overlying sonographic features with other breast masses, histology remains the gold standard. Happy reading.

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