



“PRIORITIES OF HEALTH ECONOMICS IN AFRICA”

Inaugural Conference of the African Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA)
10th – 12th March 2009 - Accra, Ghana

Parallel session 6: Public health research issues: measurement of health; community based health services; prescription practices; and determinants

PS 06/8

The river blindness control programme among farming communities in Benue state: an assessment of community-directed distributors of ivermectin in the north-central zone of Nigeria.

UMEH, J.C. AND AMUTA, R.

Department of Agricultural Economic, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

River blindness poses very serious health and therefore socio-economic problems to the rural inhabitants of Africa and particularly West African coastlines. The total population of the meso and hyper endemicity within the study area is 2,779,524 in 2007. The health problems of the disease include blindness, leopard skin, nodules, etc. The use of ivermectin to control the disease is economical as it is provided free to the communities who select and train some of their subjects (known as Community-Directed Distributors, CDDs) for the administration of the drug.

The study analysed the perceptions of farming communities in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria with regards to their CDDs. It also examined the problems of the CDDs along with solutions suggested by community leaders, government health workers and the CDDs as well. A total of 186 randomly sampled respondents comprising 94 community members, 42 CDDs, 25 government health workers and 25 community leaders who could be located were interviewed. The data were analysed using tables, percentages, frequencies, and a chi-square test. Though the CDDs were perceived as being effective in ivermectin distribution by the community members, the CDDs however identified their problems as lack of mobility (42%), lack of incentives (24%) uncooperative attitudes by the drug recipients (29%) in the course of carrying out their duties. These problems could be threats to the sustainability of the Community-directed Treatment with Ivermectin (CDTI) Programme in combating river blindness in endemic areas. Majority of the respondents suggested that cash incentives should be given to the CDDs either by the government (17.6%) or through community-generated efforts (28.7%).