Women’s Access to Hepatitis B Prevention and Treatment Information

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Abstract: Hepatitis B Viral disease is a health problem that is endemic in most parts of the world. The disease is mostly widespread in poor regions where there are little or no access to hospitals and health care facilities. This study explores women’s knowledge of the Hepatitis B Virus and how health campaigns of the disease can be used to sensitize the women in order to increase testing, prevention and possible treatment of the hepatitis B Virus. Random sampling was used to select 30 women in deprived areas of Ghana, to find out their views on the Hepatitis B Virus. Out of the results obtained, the study concluded that all the women have heard about Hepatitis B, none of the women has ever tested for the Hepatitis B Virus because of high cost health care delivery. In lieu of that community health campaigns should be done in these impoverished areas to positively impact knowledge on the hepatitis B disease and possibly do free testing, vaccination and treatment.

Keywords: Hepatitis B, Health Problem, Women’s Knowledge, Cost Health Care & Treatment.

1. Introduction
Since Ghana’s decentralization process in the early 1990’s, government officials and international aid agencies, donors and non- governmental organizations have engaged in tremendous efforts to enhance attention to women’s concerns and improve gender sensitivity in developmental processes at the local level.

For nearly three decades, Ghana has observed the system develop despite challenges to improve better service delivery and the quality of life for everyone. Throughout the years, Ghanaians have also seen increasing shift to women and gender issues through development and advocacy interventions.

Hepatitis B is a chronic disease that affects the liver. Chronic infection with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) affects an average of 257 million people globally according to the World Health Organization. Many people are believed to have acquired the infection during childbirth or in infancy, and before the widespread availability of hepatitis B vaccine. Once infected, up to 90% of infants will develop chronic HBV infection. Left untreated, approximately 15%–25% of those with chronic HBV infection develop serious liver disease, including cirrhosis, liver damage, and even liver cancer (Department of Health and Human Services, 2019).
1.1 Problem Statement

The worrying aspect about this health issue is that despite policies and rules governing gender and health issues in most organizations, there is little evidence to show that they are being followed. Hence, what is needed is a mindset change rather than more policies and this can only be done if the workforce of the informal sector is sensitized to the needs of women.

Hepatitis B affects women; most of them got the disease from their male sex partners. Since women remain the poorest population, they do not have the economic means to access health facilities. Access to hospitals and health facilities remains a problem in deprived areas. It is against this background that a study of a health campaign on Hepatitis B and its impact on women is done.

1.2 Objective of the Study

As part of the process of improving women’s access to Hepatitis B prevention and treatment, a field research was conducted to identify the extent to which women have knowledge of Hepatitis B. This will help the government, international donors and social change activists to be innovative to encourage women to have a better understanding of Hepatitis B prevent it and possibly treat it which will improve their lives on the whole.

2. Literature Review

A research was conducted on Gender and the utilization of health services in the Ashanti Region in Ghana. The research sought to structure a model for the use of gender-based health services for the Ashanti Region of Ghana, and furthermore to recommend intervention methods to ensure gender equity in the use of health care services. A sample size of 650 was used. A multiple regression model was used to compute the results. Results showed that although females have more need for health services than males, they do not use health services as much. Also, quality of service, health status, service cost and education have greater effect on male use than females. Whilst distance and income have higher impact on female use. The recommendations are to ensure equality in health care usage; females should be empowered through increased access to formal education and economically viable opportunities. The introduction of a free health care delivery will also help increase women’s access to health care facilities. (Buor, Daniel, 2004).

Using a group of 87 individuals, 39 men and 48 women were random sampled from a population of Cambodian American people. These people participated in the community health worker programme and a follow up data of 6 months post intervention concluded that 15% of men and 31% of women reported they had received a HBV test. HBV related knowledge levels increased (Victoria, M Taylor et al, 2013).

3. Methodology

For the purposes of the research, key respondents were women from the informal sector selected from Teshie Nungua and surrounding areas all in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

3.1 Sample Size

Random Sampling was the technique used to gather the data, the sample size is 30. The questionnaires were administered to people who were readily available. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

3.2 Sex Category of Respondents

Questionnaires were administered to females in the study area. The administered questionnaires indicated high level of women participation in the informal sector.

3.3 Background Information of the Respondents

From the answers given by the respondents it was acknowledged that rural urban migration is still predominant. You find most women migrating to the capital for greener pastures. Also most respondents have little educational background with the highest being secondary school.
3.4 Limitations for the Study
Most respondents were reluctant to fill the questionnaires as they explained their busy schedule. Also the respondents complained that the questionnaires were too lengthy.

3.5 The study seeks to achieve:
The views of women in the informal sector about Hepatitis B.
The extent of knowledge women have about Hepatitis B
The challenges women face when they go to the hospitals and other health centers.
The number of women in the informal sector who access Hospitals and health centers.
The healthcare services women are likely to access and why?
The challenges women in the informal sector face that prevents them from getting vaccinated against the disease

4. Findings
4.1 Women and Hepatitis B
The rationale behind this research topic was to ascertain the existing knowledge as well as to the extent to which the respondents have been exposed to Hepatitis B. At the end of the research it was realized that all the respondents have some knowledge of the Hepatitis B. 50% of the respondents had plans to get tested at the time of the interview. 50% of the women do not have any plans to get tested at all.

4.2 Views of Women on Vaccination to Prevent Hepatitis B
It was interesting to note that some respondents do not have any knowledge of the vaccination against the Hepatitis B Virus and other respondents visibly did not have any interest whatsoever in accessing getting vaccinated. Other women also think that Hepatitis B affect men because they are promiscuous; therefore only men should be vaccinated against the disease. Moreover, People who attend health centers are ill-treated. Furthermore, the rich are attended to fast when they patronize these health centers as against those who had no money or limited funds. Most respondents also complained about the high cost of vaccination against the disease.

4.3 Assessment of the number of women and the healthcare service they patronize.
From the research it was gathered that 30% of women access the Government Hospitals, 20% access drugstores, 13.33% access Polyclinics, 6.66% access both private hospitals as well as traditional health clinics and 1.33% don’t access any health facility. This is represented in the pie chart below.
The determinants of health service delivery are mainly cost (33.33%), distance (23.33%), service quality (16.66%) and NHIS availability (26.66%).

4.4 Suggestions to create awareness of the Hepatitis B
The following core suggestions were made by the respondents during the research to improve create awareness of hepatitis B to ensure women participation.
- Hepatitis B testing should be made free of charge if possible; Provisions should be made for those who cannot pay the full amount.
- There should be improved health care delivery.
- Proper education and awareness creation of Hepatitis B should be done by concerned institutions and groups.
- Women especially pregnant women should be tested for free to prevent them from passing it on to their babies.
- More funds should be allocated to Hepatitis B prevention and treatment.
- Hepatitis B testing, vaccination and treatment should be available at all health centers.

4.5 General Findings
From the results obtained from the study conducted to assess the extent to which women in the informal sector have knowledge of Hepatitis B and assess hospitals and health centers for possible prevention and treatment of the disease, from the results obtained these were the main findings:
- From the analysis, majority of the women in the informal sector have little or no educational background with the highest being the second cycle institution.
- The report also showed that rural urban migration is still predominant in Ghana, you find most women migrating to the capital for greener pastures.
- It is encouraging to know that all the women interviewed have some knowledge about Hepatitis B although 50% had no plans of getting tested due to high cost of medical care.
- Most women access government hospitals because it is cheaper, cost is the main determinant of health care delivery.
5. Recommendations and Conclusions
   Based on the analysis of the data obtained there is the need to stress on decentralization, that is bringing developments to the grass roots so that most women do not embark on rural urban migration.

   To improve access to health facilities and women participation, the registration cost of testing of the hepatitis B virus should be free at all health centers. People especially women should be treated with care when they access health facilities.

   The government should therefore create more Hepatitis B awareness through print and media advertisement and also through campaigns in both English and local languages. There should be funding for free testing, vaccination and possible treatment of women in impoverish areas to prevent the prevalent spreading of the disease.

6. References


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