

Abstract

Objective;

To determine awareness of spread, pre-disposing factors, control and effects of malaria in Kibera slums, to facilitate designing community based interventions.

Design;

Cross-sectional study Setting; Gatwikira Village, Kibera Division, Nairobi

Subjects;

160 households (80% response rate) by stratified systematic sampling.

Main outcome measures;

Awareness of malaria as disease, symptoms, relationship to vector, predisposing factors, prevention and control measures, burden of disease and health seeking behaviour.

Results;

All respondents demonstrated awareness of malaria as disease. Main symptoms associated with malaria were fever (91%), headache (67%), joint pains (51%) and malaise (48%). Majority associated malaria with mosquito vector (72%) but a larger number (76%) with erroneous causative factors. Predisposing factors were mosquito breeding sites due to poorly disposed refuse (53%), rains (28%), stagnant water (11%) and bushes (11%). Awareness of prevention and control measures included destroying mosquito breeding sites (39%), insecticides use (38%), prophylactic drugs (32%) and mosquito nets (29%). 9% did not know of any control measures while 33% gave erroneous measures. For health seeking behaviour, 87% went to health institutions for treatment while 62% purchase over-the-counter drugs (self-medication). Most felt effects as burden of disease were draining of households' resources (76%) and work absenteeism (50%).

Conclusions;

The community is aware of malaria as a disease but are handicapped by lack of adequate knowledge on symptoms, cause, predisposing factors, prevention and control measures. There is urgent need for health education and cost-effective sustainable community based intervention activities for the prevention, control and curative management of malaria.