

Title: Neglected Tropical Diseases In Zambia - A Scoping Review Of Literature On Control, Diagnosis And Treatment

Background

WHO recognizes 21 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) which affect over 1.5 billion of the world's poorest population and cause significant morbidity. Zambia is endemic to four case management diseases (cysticercosis, Human African Trypanosomiasis- HAT, Leprosy and Rabies), and four preventive chemotherapy NTDs (Schistosomiasis, Trachoma, Soil Helminths and Lymphatic Filariasis). This scoping review aims to determine the extent of the body of literature on NTD diagnosis, control strategies and treatment in Zambia and to provide recommendations in line with the national vision to have an NTD free country by 2030.

Methodology

We carried out an electronic search on Google scholar and PubMed, a total of 258 peer reviewed articles without restrictions of study designs appeared in the search. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta- Analysis Extension for Scoping Review (PRISMA-ScR) was used and out of the 125 articles published between 2009 – 2023, 41 met the inclusion criteria for inclusion in this analysis.

Results

From the 41 studies analyzed, 7 were on HAT, 12 on schistosomiasis, 2 on rabies, 5 on filariasis, 6 on soil transmitted helminths, 7 on cysticercosis, 2 on trachoma and none on leprosy. Majority of studies done are on schistosomiasis with broad context including diagnostic modalities and prevalence of other presentations including genital and hepatorenal. Diagnostic challenges highlighted for most NTDs are capacity to carry out molecular tests at lower-level facilities and lack of skilled personnel. Major control strategies include vector control through various strategies, intensifying health promotion activities, building capacity at community level and using a one health approach to manage cases. Mass drug distribution remains the mainstay for PC – NTDS with evidence of better control and halting future morbidity in school going children.

Conclusion

Despite being endemic to 8 NTDS, Schistosomiasis is the most studied NTD in Zambia leaving a huge knowledge gap for control, treatment and diagnosis of the 7 others. This calls for concerted efforts to increase research, that will provide evidence for improved control and diagnostic strategies.