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Ocular morbidity in rural communities in Nigeria

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Approximately, 80% of blindness is avoidable. Poverty and ignorance has been reported as factors responsible for many cases. There is a poor uptake of orthodox eye health services and an increase in the consultation of traditional healers in the developing countries. Age, level of education, occupation, cost and accessibility to those traditional healers has been reported as predictors of this behavior. The absence of eye care services at the rural areas has necessitated the use of free eye screening/treatment as tools for educating and offering eye care to these rural dwellers. Various patterns of eye diseases have been described in different regions and localities within and outside Nigeria. The study aims to determine the pattern and prevalence of ocular disorder in some rural areas of Imo state in Nigeria where primary eye care facilities are scare with a view in making recommendations to the health authorities for proper planning of eye care services. This was a retrospective review of data generated from self-selected patients during free eye screening organized in each of the 3 senatorial zones of Imo State in Nigeria. A total of 1973 subjects participated in the outreach. There were 1111 (56.3%) females and 862 (43.7%) males giving a ratio of 1.3:1. The most common causes of ocular morbidity were refractive error (31.6%), glaucoma (23.5%), presbyopia (17%) and cataract (12.5%). Refractive errors, glaucoma and cataract were significantly associated with age and sex while presbyopia was only positively associated with age. Considering the causes of ocular morbidity noted in this study, there is an urgent need to establish primary eye care services in those remote and rural areas in order to achieve the vision 2020 goal of eliminating avoidable blindness.

Biography

Jerrygibsyn Ekeh is an Optometrist, graduated from Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria. He has his expertise on primary eye health care, his evaluation model based on responsive analysis creates new pathways for improving eye health and his desire to improve eye care lead him to various outreach in rural eastern Nigeria. He is a holder of Doctor of Optometry degree.

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