

# 28<sup>th</sup> WORLD NUTRITION CONGRESS

November 12-13, 2018 Sydney, Australia

## Awareness in the context of prevalence of vitamin A deficiency among households in Western Kenya using a cross-sectional study

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**Statement of the Problem:** Kenya loses 121,000 DALYs annually that is attributable to vitamin A deficiency (VAD). This amounts to, between 0.5% and 1% of the gross national product, yearly. According to 1999 Kenya micronutrient survey, 76% of children had VAD making Kenya one of the countries with low serum levels according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and by 2008, the VAD prevalence had raised to 84%. This paper examined community awareness of existence, signs and symptoms, causes, control of VAD as well as attitudes, so as to identify knowledge gaps among health workers and caretakers/ mothers.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** This was a community-based study within the catchment areas served by health facilities offering antenatal care services in Western Kenya. The study adopted cross-sectional design and purposive sampling techniques. Eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with pregnant and lactating mothers and eight key informant interviews with those in charge of health facilities until saturation. Data was audio recorded, transcribed, coded and thematically analyzed using ATLAS.ti version 6 software.

**Findings:** Most respondents stated having heard about VA/VAD but very few had the correct knowledge of signs and symptoms, causes and control of VAD. Their attitude towards VAD and its control were generally indifferent with a general belief that they had no control over their circumstances to reduce VAD.

**Conclusion & Significance:** Although VAD was prevalent in the study area, majority of the people in the community had low awareness. This study, therefore, stresses the need for health education to raise community's awareness on VAD in such settings in order to augment prevention, control and elimination efforts.

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