

Investigating a Scabies outbreak at Lokomwila Health post in Kanchibiya District, Muchinga Province, Zambia, 2023

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Introduction

Scabies, a neglected tropical disease affecting 200 million people globally according to the World Health Organization (WHO), pose a significant public health problem. Following reports of increased scabies cases in the Lokomwila catchment area, an investigation was conducted to confirm the outbreak, describe its characteristics, identify the cause, and provide control measures.

Methods

A multidisciplinary team investigated the outbreak in Lokomwila catchment area from 11th to 15th September 2023. We defined a suspected case as any individual presenting with intense pruritus, skin rash, and secondary infections on any part of the body from January to September 2023. A confirmed case was a suspected case with a positive skin scrapping with the presence of mites and eggs of the *Sarcoptes Scabies*. We actively searched for symptoms among outpatient department attendees and searched registers to find any missed cases. Each patient was traced back to their village and more cases were recorded from the patient's contacts. Interviews were conducted on Signs, Symptoms, and their progression with patients,

caregivers, and key informants. Skin scrapings were collected for laboratory examinations. Descriptive statistics are reported.

Results

We identified 75 suspected scabies cases, 53% were males and the median age was seven years, ranging from 0-80 years. Prevalence was 3%, with no scabies-related deaths. Children aged 0-4 years had the highest number of affected persons 31 (41%). All 75(100%) affected persons presented with intense pruritus and generalized rash, 31(41%) presented with scaly crusted skin and 9(12%) had excoriated skin. Poor hygiene, direct skin contact and overcrowding were the main issues noted during interviews.

Conclusion

The investigation confirmed a scabies outbreak in Lokomwila catchment in Kanchibiya District, primarily affecting children. We carried out mass treatment of the patients using Benzyl Benzoate cream 25% and Health education on how to maintain proper personal hygiene, including how to wash and air dry their clothing and bedding in the sun to prevent the spread of the disease. This

investigation highlights the need for enhanced scabies surveillance and control strategies in the district catchment population.