

## **Perceived risk of Lassa fever infection and its preventive practices among residents of Owo and Ifedore Local Government Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Lassa fever is a zoonotic viral hemorrhagic disease endemic in Nigeria, with recurrent outbreaks affecting rural and urban populations. Perception of risk, encompassing perceived susceptibility and severity, plays a pivotal role in shaping preventive practices. This study assessed and compared the perceived risk of acquiring Lassa fever and the practice of Lassa fever preventive measures.

### **Methods**

The study was a comparative cross-sectional survey that employed a quantitative design. Three hundred and thirty-two respondents per group were selected from the two LGAs (one endemic and non-endemic) using a multistage sampling method. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Product for Service Solutions (IBM-SPSS) version 25. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### **Results**

The results showed that ninety-four percent (Ifedore) and ninety eight percent (Owo) respondents LGA were aware of Lassa fever. Twenty eight percent were within the age group of 30-39 years in both LGAs, while 79.8% respondents in Ifedore and 70.8% in Owo LGAs were married. 50% of the respondents and 39.2% had secondary education as their highest required level in Ifedore and Owo LGA, respectively. 78% of respondents in Ifedore LGA had good knowledge of Lassa fever as compared to 55.4% in Owo LGA and this was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=41.481$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). However, 46% (Ifedore) and 44% (Owo) LGAs had a high risk perception of Lassa fever, 53.9% (Ifedore) and 55.7% (Owo) LGAs had a low perceived susceptibility of Lassa fever infection. Sixty two percent (Ifedore) and 43% (Owo) LGAs had low perceived benefit of Lassa fever preventive practices, while 71 % (Ifedore) and 75% (Owo) LGAs had high perceived barrier towards Lassa fever preventive practices. 80%

(Ifedore) and 56.5% (Owo) LGA had good preventive practices towards Lassa fever.

### **Conclusion**

This study concluded that there is high level of awareness of Lassa fever in both LGAs, and the preventive practices of Lassa fever were good in both LGAs. The determinants of good preventive practices were high-level awareness, knowledge and education on Lassa fever disease.