

Awareness and acceptability of Lassa fever preventive measures among residents of endemic communities in Nigeria: A cross-sectional assessment

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Introduction

Lassa fever spreads mainly through contact with food or household items that are contaminated with excreta of rodents, or through human-to-human transmission. Despite its severe health implications, public awareness of Lassa fever prevention strategies is limited, especially in underserved communities. Hence, this study aims to evaluate the level of awareness of the preventive measures for Lassa fever among residents of selected endemic communities, as well as their willingness to adopt such measures

Methods

Employing a cross-sectional design, we used an 18-item structured and self-administered questionnaire to collect data from two Lassa fever-endemic communities in Nigeria: Amachara, Ebonyi State, and Ugbe, Ondo State. Data was collected from 334 participants (182 from Amachara and 152 from Ugbe) from March to April, 2024. Inferential and descriptive analyses were done using IBM SPSS 27.0, where significance was set as $p < 0.05$.

Results

More than half of the respondents were females ($n = 242$; 72.45%) and were within the age of 35-44 years ($n = 114$, 34.1%). Of the 334 respondents, 318 (95.21%) had heard of Lassa fever. While 257

(76.95%) respondents were aware of at least one preventive measure, only 68 (20.36%) reported practicing rodent-proof food storage at home. Most respondents ($n = 308$; 92.2%) were willing to adopt preventive measures such as improving waste disposal practices and household sanitation. Also, having a higher educational qualification ($p = 0.001$) and having a prior contact with a health education campaign ($p = 0.003$) were associated with increased willingness to adopt Lassa fever preventive measures.

Conclusion

The level of awareness of Lassa fever was high in the two communities, whereas the practice of its preventive measures was low. Acceptability of these preventive measures was also high. Targeted educational intervention and improved community sanitation infrastructure are needed to enhance the practice of preventive measures.