

# Acute medical conditions in under five year old children at a public hospital in Kenya

## Abstract:

To determine the prevalence of childhood preventable and treatable medical conditions and the parent's/guardian's knowledge about the conditions and their management. A descriptive cross-sectional study. Paediatric medical wards at Kenyatta National hospital. All children aged 0-60 months with preventable conditions (that included pneumonia, malaria, diarrhoea/dehydration, meningitis and malnutrition) in paediatric wards who had stayed in the ward for 24 to 48 hours. Two hundred and fifty six parents/guardians staying with their children were recruited into the study. The vast majority (85.5%) of the children were aged less than two years. The prevalence of the acute treatable and preventable medical conditions was 88.6% over a one month period. The leading cause of admission for most children was pneumonia (31.6%) followed by malnutrition (16.8%) and gastro-enteritis (16%). Other conditions included neonatal sepsis (9.1%), measles (6%) and malaria (4.8%). The parents'/guardians' mean and median age was 26 years and the majority (89.8%) were mothers. A great proportion (46.5%) of the parents/guardians had attained at least some primary education. More than 70% of the parents/guardians were found to lack knowledge about their children's health problems and the drugs they were using. This was regardless of the parent's/guardians level of education and the frequency of admission of the child. Acute preventable and treatable medical conditions at KNH are highly prevalent, and the leading conditions include pneumonia, malnutrition and gastroenteritis. Most parents/guardians did not understand their children's health problems regardless of their level of education.