

Changes in sources of treatment occurring after inception of a community-based malaria control programme in Saradidi, Kenya

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Abstract:

To determine the changes in source of antimalarial treatment and perceptions about malaria after the initiation of a community-based malaria control programme in Saradidi, Kenya, two identical surveys were carried out; one in March 1982 (before the programme began in May 1982) and the other in December 1984. Three areas were involved: areas A and B had antimalarial treatment provided by village health helpers (VHH's) and area C had VHH's who did not provide treatment. Two groups of randomly selected women age 15 to 59 years were interviewed: 45 in survey 1 and 92 in survey 2. A decided change in the source of malaria treatment was observed. In the first survey, 52.9% of the respondents from areas A and B combined purchased antimalarial medicine from shops; other sources were government health facilities, mission clinics, and the Saradidi community clinic. By the second survey, 85.2% of the respondents in areas A and B obtained treatment from the VHH's; no significant change occurred in area C. In both surveys the leading reasons given for people purchasing drugs from shops was that the distance to health facilities was great, that no transport was available and that shops were open when emergencies occurred. The shopkeeper frequently advised which drug to take and the dosage as well as selling the drugs. For family illnesses of unknown aetiology most people (82.2% in survey 1 and 97.8%, in survey 2) went to a hospital or clinic. These results demonstrate that the malaria control programme in Saradidi has influenced both the source of antimalarials and the attitudes people have about malaria. In Saradidi, Kenya people chose to obtain antimalarial treatment and advice from community health workers.