

AMERICAN HEART CONGRESS - CVD

October 05-06, 2018 | Los Angeles, USA

Preparedness for cardiovascular disease challenge in Cameroon: Perspectives from a cross-sectional survey of primary health care facilities in the North West Region

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Introduction: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for over 30% of global death annually and about 80% of the deaths occur in low and middle-income countries. With the growing epidemic of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) globally and in the Sub-Saharan region especially, there is a need for very aggressive efforts to ensure adequate preparedness of countries to manage CVDs at the Primary health care (PHC) level.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional survey of PHC facilities in the NW Region including public, private and confessional facilities. A multistage sampling was used, an adapted questionnaire was used to collect data on the availability of basic equipment, guidelines, essential CVD medications and the cost of these medications. Data were analyzed using Epi INFO version 7.1.

Results: A total of 40 PHC facilities were included with 53% rural, 22% semi-urban and 25% urban. Fifty-five percent (55%) public, 18% private and 27% were confessional facilities. Guidelines for hypertension and diabetes were found in 20% and 22% of the health facilities respectively. There was a 100% availability of Glucometer and stethoscope, 97% availability of sphygmomanometer and a 25% availability of ECG machines. Spironolactone, statins, methyldopa, nitrites, digoxin, aspirin had less than 70% availability among the studied facilities. The median (monthly) cost of spironolactone (\$2.54), methyldopa (\$2.82), captopril (\$2.82), digoxin (\$0.56), nifedipine (\$1.69) and aspirin (\$0.56).

Conclusion: There was an extremely low availability of guidelines, most of the PHCs had glucometer and BP monitor, but 1 in 4 had an ECG machine. Essential medications were available in a majority of PHCs, however, not readily affordable to the lowest paid unskilled worker. Much effort still needs to be done to ensure that the PHC facilities are adequately prepared for the challenges of CVDs in the region.

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