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Knowledge, attitudes and practices on schistosomiasis in sub-saharan africa: A systematic review

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Background: The World Health Organization emphasizes on the use of integrative approaches in the control and elimination of schistosomiasis. A detailed understanding of sociocultural factors that may influence the uptake of the intended health activities and services is vital. Thus, our study sought to understand the knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and practices about schistosomiasis in various communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methods: A systematic search of literature for the period 2006-2016 was done on Medline, PubMed, CINAHL, Psych info and Google Scholar using the following keywords “Schistosomiasis, *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium*, knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and practices in Sub-Saharan Africa” in combination with Boolean operators (OR, AND). In this context, we reviewed studies conducted among school children, community members and caregivers of preschool children.

Results: Studies reviewed reflected inadequate knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to schistosomiasis. Age, gender, occupation, and level of education were widely shown to have an impact on schistosomiasis knowledge and practices. About 60% of the studies reviewed reflected widespread misconceptions on the transmission and prevention of schistosomiasis. The disease was mostly believed to be caused by HIV, consuming unclean water and contaminated food. Risky water-related practices such as swimming, bathing and washing clothes in open water bodies were identified as key factors promoting transmission of the disease.

Conclusion: The study concluded that a comprehensive health education programme using contextual and standardized training tools may improve peoples’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to schistosomiasis prevention and control.

Biography

Miss Hlengiwe is an applied researcher who draws from her experience in health systems research, program designing, and evaluation to address real societal problems, particularly in vulnerable communities. She holds a Master of Science degree in Public Health where she effectively utilized the structural equation modeling approach to study high-risk sexual behaviors for HIV among in-school youth in Swaziland. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Public Health at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her Ph.D. research is on schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis treatment coverage and efficacy of praziquantel among preschool children aged 1-5 years in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Her studies will contribute towards the redefining of guidelines for schistosomiasis prevention and control among children in South Africa.

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