

Developing a Qualitative Study Framework to Understand Current State of ENT in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ENT in Sub-Saharan Africa

Background

- 95-99% of the population in SSA have no access to timely and affordable ENT care
- Barriers include financial, geographic, and cultural barriers along with insufficient training, infrastructure and policies

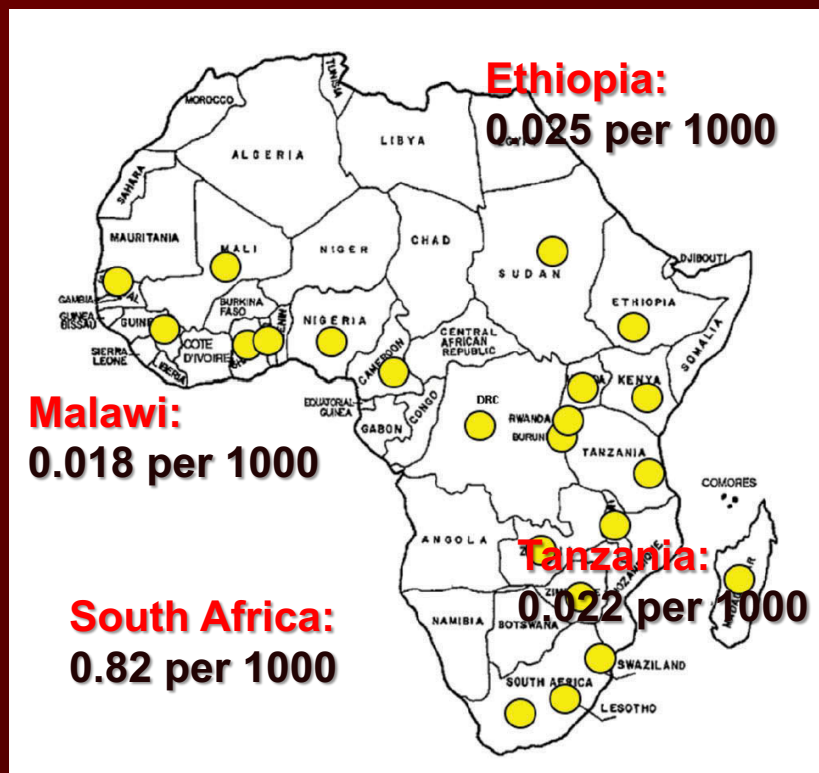


Physician Density in Sub-Saharan Africa

Background

WHO
recommendation:
1 per 1000

USA:
2.57 per 1000

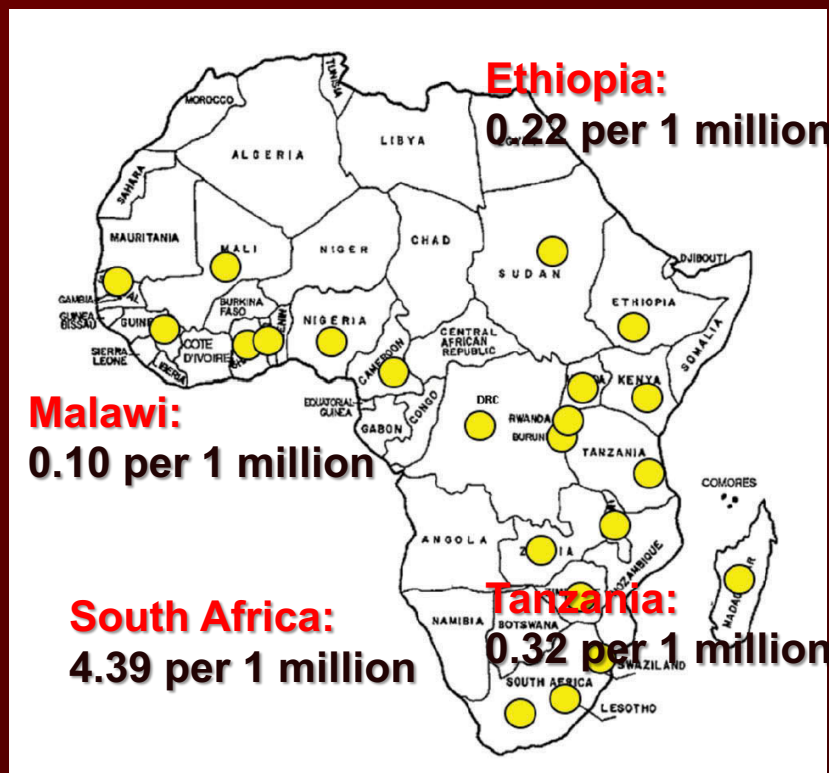


Mulwafu et al (2017). Survey of ENT services in sub-Saharan Africa: little progress between 2009 and 2015
http://www.who.int/gho/health_workforce/physicians_density/en/

Physician Density in Sub-Saharan Africa

Background

USA:
30.8 ENT
per 1 million



Mulwafu et al. Survey of ENT services in sub-Saharan Africa: little progress between 2009 and 2015 (2007)
http://www.who.int/gho/health_workforce/physicians_density/en/

ENT in Sub-Saharan Africa

Background

- **Aim:** To understand scope of ENT practices in SSA and barriers to ENT care from perspectives of local healthcare professionals using qualitative research methods

Methods

- **Study Population:**

- Local healthcare professionals working in related field of otolaryngology

- **Study Setting:**

- Pilot study ongoing in affiliated tertiary hospitals in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Tanzania

- **Analysis:**

- Qualitative content analysis
- Themes, subthemes, and selected quotes from the interview data will be presented

Interview Guide Sample Questions

Methods

- **Scope of ENT**

- Tell me about what it is like to practice otolaryngology?
- Can you explain what being an otolaryngologists here is like?
- What patient problems do you typically see?

- **ENT training**

- What otolaryngology training options are available in your country?
- What are the barriers of training in otolaryngology?
- How common are these barriers? How rare are these barriers?

- **Ways to improve access to ENT care**

- In your opinion, what are the ways to increase number of ENT physicians in your country?
- What support from the developed country will help the most?

Interview Guide Sample Questions

Methods

- **Additional questions**
 - **Causes of delays to presentation to ENT clinic**
 - **Cultural barriers to ENT care**
 - **Experiences with medical/surgical mission trips from the developed countries**
 - **Exposure to ENT before residency**

Theme 1: Scope of ENT Practice

Results

- **Otological diseases are very common**
 - “There are more patients with ear infections ... When I was a medical student I saw patients with meningitis and brain abscesses that started from simple chronic otitis media... Died because of lack of medical care. That made me change my mind and join ENT.”

Theme 1: Scope of ENT Practice

Results

- **Otological diseases are very common**
- **Scope of ENT surgery is limited**
 - “Most people think that ENT is all about ear, nose, and throat as the name indicates. We do mostly ear and nose surgeries, some on throat. Many patients with neck and facial diseases get referred to other department.”

Theme 1: Scope of ENT Practice

Results

- **Otological diseases are very common**
- **Scope of ENT surgery is limited**
- **Head and neck oncology care needs substantial improvement**
 - **“Head and neck problems need the most improvement, especially oncology part ... There is only one radiation therapy center available in the entire country. Wait time is 3-6 mo to get therapy started.”**

Theme 2: Barriers to ENT Care

Results

- **Lack of awareness in ENT as a subspecialty**
 - “Most patients don’t even know that ENT exists. ... There is no information about ENT profession. .. I didn’t know about ENT until my C2 [second year as a medical student]”

Theme 2: Barriers to ENT Care

Results

- **Lack of awareness in ENT as a subspecialty**
- **Insufficient number of ENT physicians**
 - “There is only one ENT physician in southern region of Ethiopia. He is serving about 100 patients a day in [outpatient clinic] and covering 2-3 centers. It is very bulky job.”

Theme 2: Barriers to ENT Care

Results

- **Lack of awareness in ENT as a subspecialty**
- **Insufficient number of ENT physicians**
- **Cultural barriers**
 - “Before presenting to the hospital, patients will try holy water or herbal medicine first. ... Most patients think that traditional healers are better than doctors. Like the patient that we diagnosed with hypopharyngeal cancer with biopsy, she was not believing on us, that’s why she had uvulectomy [by a traditional healer]”

Theme 3: Ways to Improve ENT Care *Results*

- **Increasing number of ENT residency programs and improve geographical distribution**
 - “There have been a push from government to increase number of specialists. ... 1000 [medical school graduates] joined the National resident matching program but only 10 got accepted into ENT residency this year.... There needs more opening to catch up to demand.”

Theme 3: Ways to Improve ENT Care Results

- **Increasing number of ENT residency programs and improve geographical distribution.**
- **Improving ENT diseases awareness among patients and general practitioners**
 - **“I’ve seen many delays to [our ENT outpatient clinic] because general practitioners will treat the patients with what they have in mind such as infections first before referring ... 2 weeks preclinical courses and 2 weeks as an intern rotating on ENT department are only exposure to for GPs.”**

Theme 3: Ways to Improve Access to ENT Care

Results

- **Increasing number of ENT residency programs and improve geographical distribution.**
- **Improving ENT diseases awareness among patients and general practitioners**
- **Support from the developed countries**
 - “There are only 3 ENT physicians in our region. Whenever there is campaign from UK or USA, we notice that there is so much more to learn... [such as] different techniques for tympanoplasty, mastoid, and neck surgeries”
 - “It is more interesting when we are more involved. [During last campaign], we were not involved, but this time we assisted in surgeries taking fascia graft and raising tympanomeatal flap. And there were cases saved for residents and lectures at the end of the surgery summarizing what we did for the whole day”

Discussions

- **Scope of ENT practice is largely limited in many SSA countries. Low ENT physician density and lack of awareness in ENT disease worsen the burden among patients.**
- **Financial and educational support to build sustainable ENT training programs needed.**
- **Future plan to expand the study setting to different countries in SSA and further explore various alternative ENT care and training models in SSA.**

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