Health system, socio-cultural, economic, environmental and individual factors influencing bed net use in the prevention of malaria in pregnancy in two Ghanaian Regions

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Objective

Ghana has implemented WHO recommendation of distributing free long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) to pregnant women - one of the effective strategies to combating malaria in pregnancy. However, the burden of negative outcomes of malaria in pregnancy is still high, giving credence to the question of why efforts towards promoting knowledge, awareness and ownership of LLINs is not guaranteeing appropriate usage. This study sought to understand health system, socio-cultural, economic and environmental dynamics in utilisation of LLINs among pregnant women in Ghana.

Method

An ethnographic study design employing observations in 8 health facilities and 12 communities, in-depth interviews and conversations among health workers, pregnant women and opinion leaders was used. The University of Health and Allied Sciences’ Research Ethics Committee approved the study. Nvivo software was used to support data coding and analysis.

Results

Health system, socio-cultural, economic, environmental and individual factors influenced LLIN use. Health facility readiness in stocking LLINs and receiving appropriate information from health providers improved usage. A history of LLIN use prior to becoming pregnant and having young children influenced consistent usage. Experiencing irritating effects of LLINs and preference for traditional methods reduced usage. Pregnant women whose households and family members used LLINs were influenced positively to use them. Gender power relations between husbands and wives influenced LLIN use. Type of housing and weather conditions contributed to inconsistent use.

Conclusion

Facilities should be encouraged to constantly maintain LLINs stock. Issuing LLINs to ANC clients and community members should be accompanied with context-sensitive information, to promote community acceptance and proper use.