

Ensuring equitable vaccination coverage to prevent bacterial meningitis in Nigeria among school children

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Dear Editor,

Ensuring equitable vaccination coverage to prevent bacterial meningitis in Nigeria among school children is a vital public health concern. Bacterial meningitis is a severe infection that affects the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord¹. It is caused by a variety of bacteria, including *Neisseria meningitidis* and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), and can lead to severe complications, including brain damage, hearing loss, and death¹. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent bacterial meningitis, and it is essential to ensure that all school children in Nigeria have access to the vaccines they need².

One of the major challenges in ensuring equitable immunization coverage in Nigeria is insufficient access to vaccines². According to the 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and National Immunization Coverage Survey (NICS), at least 64% of Nigerian children aged 12–23 months have not received all recommended vaccinations in the past five years. Additionally, it demonstrates that between 2016 and 2021, 46% of children had only a partial vaccination³. This is due to a variety of factors, including a lack of infrastructure and resources, limited access to healthcare services, and inadequate education and awareness about the importance of vaccination².

Another challenge is the low vaccination coverage among certain populations. For example, a study conducted found out that vaccination coverage among children in rural areas was significantly lower than in urban areas⁴. Additionally, certain ethnic groups and socioeconomic groups may have lower vaccination coverage due to cultural beliefs, lack of access to healthcare services, or other factors⁵.

To address these challenges, there are several strategies that can be implemented to ensure equitable vaccination

coverage among school children in Nigeria. One strategy is to work closely with schools and communities to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of vaccination and the risks of not vaccinating their children⁶.

Another strategy is to provide vaccinations in accessible and convenient locations, such as schools or community clinics⁶. Additionally, government and public health officials can work to remove any barriers to vaccination, such as cost or lack of transportation. This could involve providing financial assistance or transportation to those who need it⁷.

Additionally, community-based participatory techniques that involve community involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of vaccination campaigns can be employed⁸. For a vaccination program to be successful, it is crucial to build trust and acceptance in the community. Targeting high-risk communities is another method that could be used to achieve fair immunization coverage among Nigerian school children⁹. By focusing on these demographics, health professionals can be confident that they are reaching the children most at risk of developing bacterial meningitis.

Overall, public health officials can increase vaccination coverage and lower the incidence of bacterial meningitis among schoolchildren in Nigeria by working closely with schools and communities, providing vaccinations in convenient and accessible locations, removing barriers to vaccination, involving communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of vaccination campaigns, focusing on high-risk populations, and tracking progress.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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DATA AVAILABILITY

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PROVENANCE AND PEER REVIEW

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DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.