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Short-Term Neurologic Sequelae in Children with Cerebral Malaria in Southwest Nigeria

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Background

Cerebral Malaria is a form of severe (complicated) malaria in which there are alterations in the neurologic functions of the individual (evidenced by multiple convulsions and unarousable coma), usually due to Plasmodium falciparum.

Objective

To demonstrate the morbidity and fatality attributable to Cerebral Malaria in children.

Methods

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional study conducted at a tertiary healthcare facility in Southwest Nigeria over a 6-month period, during which consecutive children aged 6 months to 15 years with confirmed features of severe malaria according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) criteria were recruited. Subsequently, those with defining features of cerebral malaria were identified and focused on.

Results

Sixty-eight participants (out of 165 children with severe malaria, i.e. 41.2%) met the defining criteria for cerebral malaria. Sixty-three (92.3%) survived, while 5 children (7.4%) died. Among the survivors, two study participants (2.9%) had persistent neurologic deficits (hemiparesis and visual impairment) at discharge.

Conclusion

Cerebral malaria is rife in West Africa. Unnecessary mortality is still being recorded. The attendant neurologic sequelae limit the potential of the affected children and also disrupt the socio-economic functioning and stability of the families to which these children belong.