

Gaps in the Prevention and Control of Lassa Fever in New Karu, Nasarawa State

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ABSTRACT

Background: Lassa fever remains a persistent public health problem in Nigeria, especially in endemic regions such as Nasarawa State. Despite ongoing efforts, outbreaks continue to occur, suggesting gaps in community-level prevention and control efforts. This study assessed the level of knowledge of Lassa fever, attitudes, preventive practices, and challenges in the implementation of preventive measures against Lassa fever among residents of New Karu, Nasarawa State, and evaluated the availability and accessibility of preventive resources.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 272 community members using a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 27 and presented in frequencies, percentages, and chi-square tests of association, with a significance value of $p < 0.05$.

Results: Awareness of Lassa fever was high (97.4%), and 94.9% correctly identified rats or contaminated food as the source of infection. However, only 29.4% demonstrated high knowledge of the disease, 21% of the respondents practiced consistent preventive behaviors such as proper food storage and rodent control. Only 40.4% had received any form of health education, and education level was the only factor significantly associated with preventive practices ($p = 0.001$). Major gaps identified included weak health education coverage, difficulty in rodent control, poor environmental sanitation, and limited access to preventive and treatment facilities.

Conclusion: Although community awareness of Lassa fever is high, preventive practices remain inadequate due to insufficient health education, infrastructural challenges, and socio-cultural factors. Strengthening health education and improving access to preventive resources are vital for effective control of Lassa fever in New Karu and similar communities.

