

COMMUNITY OPHTHALMOLOGY

Promotion of Community-based Social Health Insurance Scheme Through Cataract Surgical Outreach

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Background: Zamfara Mutual Health Foundation (ZAMHEF) is a nongovernmental developmental organization recently established by Ummah Care Centre to promote and sustain a community-based mutual health Insurance scheme in Zamfara State under the framework of the National Health Insurance Scheme, so as to ensure access to affordable and qualitative health care service to the informal sector of the populace.^[1] The purpose of this study was to create awareness on Community-based Health Insurance Scheme (CBSHIS) and attract membership for ZAMHEF across Zamfara State. Community-based service is an effective approach to reducing the burden of blindness.^[2]

Patients and Methods: The nongovernmental organization collaborated with Zamfara State Eye Care Programme supported by Sightsavers to conduct cataract surgical outreach across all local government areas (LGAs) in Zamfara State from October 2013 through December 2014. Patients were mobilized through radio jingles, town criers, and case finding in the community by integrated primary eye care workers. A team comprising of ZAMHEF officials, ophthalmologists, ophthalmic nurses, and supporting staff visited each LGA to carry out manual small incision cataract surgery on eligible patient.

Results: ZAMHEF registered 3444 members in Zamfara as a result of this collaboration. A total of 1097 persons underwent cataract surgery operation of 13,126 screened in different communities across the 14 LGAs in Zamfara State. Twenty percent (226) of the surgeries were carried out in Gusau, the state capital owing to its cosmopolitan population. A majority of the beneficiaries were above 50 years of age and males constituting 57% [Figures 1 and 2].

Discussion: Community-based Social Health Scheme serves as a mechanism for mobilizing community resources to share in the financing of local health services for the informal sector. In addition, these schemes aim to achieve the following objectives: (1) Improve access to health care services by eliminating or by significantly reducing out-of-pocket payment for services; (2) improve quality of care by increasing both the amount and reliability of resources available for providers; and (3) improve efficiency in the allocation and use of available financial resources through improved accounting etc. Promotion of this new scheme through cataract surgical outreach, being the leading cause of blindness in Nigeria,^[3] has ensured easy acceptability of CBSHIS in Zamfara State.

Conclusion: Cataract surgical outreaches can be effective means of creating awareness and enhancing social acceptability of novel health promoting initiatives such as community-based social health insurance.

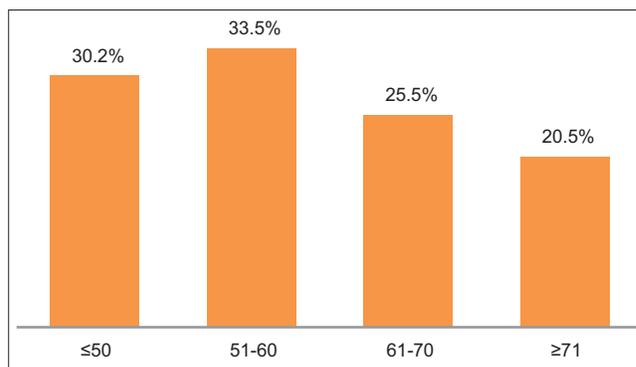


Figure 1: Distribution of patients according to age group (in years)

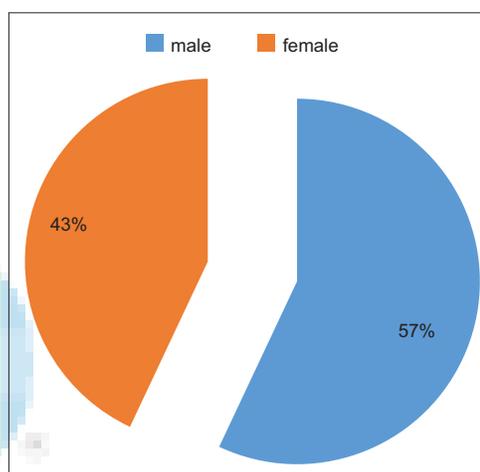


Figure 2: Gender distribution of patients that underwent surgery

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