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The role of information in the management of neglected tropical diseases: the case of snakebite envenomations in the District of Bokoro in DR Congo (DRC)

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Jacques NGAMBONGO

jacquesngambongo@yahoo.fr



Introduction: In DR Congo, the incidence and severity of snakebites are still poorly known. Studies on this subject are rare and limited to a few hospitals and households where the annual lethality varies around 5%. The lack of training of health personnel and awareness of the population on snakebites and the absence of anti-venomous serotherapy is the main difficulty encountered in this country; and also one of the factors that explains the high number of deaths and disabilities. The Bokoro district in Mai-Ndombe province often records bites followed by death. The use of tourniquets instead of Velpeau bandages, black stones, incisions and other practices that tend to aggravate the situation are common in the area. Our raid (team from the Anti-venomous Centre) took place to train health care personnel and raise awareness of the population on the prevention and improved management of snakebite envenomations with a batch of 50 vials of anti-venomous serum which has not been officially available since 1960.

Material and Methods: A retrospective and then prospective study of the population and nursing staff of the Mai-Ndombe University Clinics in Bokoro was conducted between 10 January and 12 April 2021. The study consisted of a comparative approach between the period before and after the training team in order to measure the impact of the training and sensitisation on the management of biting patients, based on an administered questionnaire.

Results: Out of a total of 151 biters:

- Before the survey: 46 bites recorded with 13 deaths (28.26%); 89.13% used the black stone, 98.02% the tourniquet, 63.04% the incision, suction 67.39% and urine 26.09%.
- After training and sensitisation: 105 bites of which 15 (14.29%) were fatal; 29 (27.6%) patients used the black stone, tourniquet (30.48%), incision (6.7%), suction (2.86%) and urine not used.

Conclusion: This study clearly establishes that public awareness and training of medical personnel are of considerable importance in improving the management of snake bites. This study, which is still fragmentary, should be continued in all the provinces in order to significantly reduce the number of deaths and disabilities.