

Gestational Malaria and Factors Influencing Mosquito Bed Net use among Pregnant Women in Biyem-Assi, Yaounde

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Abstract

Malaria is an endemic parasitic disease in Cameroon and it is transmitted by the bite of the female Anopheles. Malaria prevention methods are diverse. Their availability sometimes does not guarantee effective usage and the use of each method in isolation may not provide the necessary results for the fight against malaria. Pregnant women are relatively more vulnerable and so it is recommended that they should be protected against malaria. Proper protection will require the use of mosquito bed nets as major malaria prevention method. This study was designed to find out malaria prevalence and factors influencing the use of mosquito bed nets among pregnant women of Biyem-Assi Health District. Information on the knowledge of malaria and use of malaria prevention methods, especially bed nets was collected from 302 pregnant women attending prenatal clinics in health institutions within the Biyem-Assi Health District of Yaounde VI subdivision using a pretested questionnaire.

Index terms— malaria, pregnant women, mosquito bed net, Biyem-Assi Health District.

1 Gestational Malaria and Factors Influencing Mosquito Bed Net use among Pregnant Women in Biyem-Assi, Yaounde

Judith Lum Ndamukong-Nyanga¹, Tchanga Chanceline Flore², Ngo Batandi Helen Virginie³ & Fegue Celestine⁴ Abstract-Malaria is an endemic parasitic disease in Cameroon and it is transmitted by the bite of the female Anopheles.

Malaria prevention methods are diverse. Their availability sometimes does not guarantee effective usage and the use of each method in isolation may not provide the necessary results for the fight against malaria. Pregnant women are relatively more vulnerable and so it is recommended that they should be protected against malaria. Proper protection will require the use of mosquito bed nets as major malaria prevention method. This study was designed to find out malaria prevalence and factors influencing the use of mosquito bed nets among pregnant women of Biyem-Assi Health District. Information on the knowledge of malaria and use of malaria prevention methods, especially bed nets was collected from 302 pregnant women attending prenatal clinics in health institutions within the Biyem-Assi Health District of Yaounde VI subdivision using a pretested questionnaire. Thick smear was prepared for screening Plasmodium parasites.

Analysis was done using EPI INFO version 16 (Chicago IL USA) and test of Chi 2. The study revealed that malaria prevalence was 48.5%. The shape of mosquito net had a significant ($P = 0.05$) effect on its use and a reduction on prevalence of malaria. The use of mosquito bed net was 47.7% while some of the women (52.3%) did not use it.

Profession significantly influenced ($P = 0.04$) the use of mosquito bed nets. Some of the women did not use mosquito bed nets for different reasons such as heat, forgetfulness, neglect, dislike, etc. The shape and color influenced the use, but this was not significant. Use of mosquito bed nets as major malaria prevention methods is

not considered as priority by pregnant women. Sensitization campaigns by government and NGOs should reduce malaria prevalence during pregnancy and give a priority position to mosquito bed nets.

2 Introduction

Malaria is a fatal disease caused by parasites transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes [1]. Its major impact is almost entirely on developing countries, especially in Africa [2]. More than 85% of malaria cases and 90% of malaria deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa and mostly during the rainy season [3].

In Africa, there are several risk factors for this disease. These factors are related to the existence of the vector that promotes the transmission of the parasite, in addition to the hot climate and low socio-economic conditions that have an impact on the control of the disease [4]. Vulnerable individuals include children under 5 years of age; unimmunized pregnant women, in whom malaria often leads to miscarriages, maternal deaths, low birth weight, abortions, stillbirths, and maternal anemia due to blood loss [5,6,7]; immunocompromised individuals; and international travelers from malaria-free areas. Pregnant women are more vulnerable because their immunity has been diminished by pregnancy [8].

In Cameroon, malaria remains the major endemic disease and one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the most vulnerable groups [9]. According to the Cameroonian Ministry of Public Health, the disease accounts for 40 to 50 percent of the reasons for medical consultations, is responsible for 41 percent of deaths among children under five years of age, 18 percent of deaths in hospital facilities, and consumes about 40 percent of the annual household health budget [10]. The high morbidity and mortality rates can be explained by the insalubrity of the environment, anarchic constructions, ignorance by the population of prevention methods, low participation in control activities, lack of individual protection against mosquitoes, and the increasing resistance of Plasmodium to usual antimalarial drugs [11]. With a view to reducing the spread of this disease, the efforts undertaken at the international level are relayed at the national level by a strong commitment of the State. Thus, through the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (DSCE), the Cameroonian government has clearly stated the objective of reducing the death rate associated with malaria to less than 10% by 2035 [12]. Thus, many measures have been taken, including free treatment and treatment of malaria.

Thus, many measures have been taken, including the free treatment of children under 5 years old suffering from uncomplicated malaria by all health facilities and the free distribution of several million longlasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) [13,14].

There is a gap between the acquisition of LLINs and their use as well as adherence to their use in families with pregnant women and children. Universal coverage of LLINs remains a major challenge in malaria prevention in Cameroon. For this study, the following specific objectives were developed : 1. To determine the prevalence of gestational malaria taking into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in Biyem-Assi; 2. To determine the effect of bednet use on Plasmodium infection in pregnant women in Biyem-Assi; 3. To determine the factors influencing bednet selection and use by pregnant women in Biyem-Assi.

3 II.

4 Materials and Methods

5 a) Study Site

Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon and capital of the Central Province is located 300 km from the Atlantic coast. It is surrounded by 7 hills, the highest of which are located on the West and North-West sides. Yaounde had an area of 13614 ha in 2002 and a population of about 2 million inhabitants in 2006. Its geographical boundaries are: to the west, the District of Mbankomo; to the east, the Division of Mefou-Afamba; to the south, the Division of Mefou-Akono; and to the north, the District of Okola [15]. The climate in the city of Yaounde is equatorial, characterized by the alternation of two dry seasons and two rainy seasons. The average temperature is 23.5 o C (with a range of 16 o C and 31 o C depending on the season), and rainfall is 1650 mm of water per year. The average air humidity is 80% and varies during the day between 35 and 98%. Frequent winds (humid) blow in a south-westerly direction; strong winds are oriented towards the north-west. The vegetation is of the intertropical type with predominance of southern humid forest [15].

6 b) Target population, Data and Sample Collection

The study population consisted solely of pregnant women receiving prenatal care (ANC) and who had voluntarily approved and signed the informed consent form. The criteria for non-inclusion were refusal to participate and failure to sign the informed consent form.

The sample size was calculated according to Lorentz's formula as follows: $N = (Z^2 \times P \times Q) / d^2$

where Z is the statistical power (1.96); P is the estimated prevalence of disease; 23% based on Tonga et al. 2013 [16]; Q=1-P; d represents the level of significance (0.05). Substituting into the formula gives N = 272 pregnant women.

99 To maximize sample collection and reliability of results, 350 women were issued consent forms and 302 gave
100 consent and were enrolled in the study. Sample collection was carried out from July 25 to August 17, 2018.

101 **7 c) Questionnaire**

102 A pre-tested and validated questionnaire aimed at obtaining information on anthropometric, obstetric, envi-
103 ronmental parameters and socio-demographic characteristics was given to each pregnant woman enrolled in the
104 maternity ward. The information obtained was then recorded in a notebook, with a code assigned to each
105 participant.

106 **8 i. Collection of blood samples**

107 The participant's code as well as the date was written directly on the slide. The finger was sanitized with an
108 alcohol swab by massaging to stimulate blood circulation. With a sterile lancet, the tip of the finger was pricked.
109 By gently pressing the finger, two drops of blood were collected on the blade to be used for the thick film. The
110 blood remaining on the finger was wiped off with absorbent cotton. With the corner of the second slide, the
111 thick drop was made by bringing the two drops of blood together and spreading them in circular motion to form
112 a uniform thick layer. The slides were air dried, stored in a slide box ready for staining.

113 **9 d) Staining of thick film**

114 Giemsa's dye was prepared from the stock solution. It was diluted at 1:20 (1 volume of Giemsa stock solution
115 for 19 volumes of distilled water) and the mixture filtered through Whatman paper. The Giemsa was delicately
116 poured into the staining trough until the slides were completely immersed. The slides were left to stain for 20
117 minutes. They were rinsed under running water. The slides were arranged to drain at an angle on a slide stand
118 for 15 minutes for air drying.

119 **10 i. Observation of slides**

120 The slides were observed with the 100X objective (immersion objective) of the Light Microscope.
121 The thick film was used for the detection and quantification of trophozoites. The parasites were counted
122 against 200 leukocytes and the Parasitemia (parasites/ μ L of blood) was calculated by considering an average of
123 white blood cells at 8000/ μ L of blood for each individual according to the following formula: ??
124 _____

125 **11 Number of parasites counted \times 8000 Parasitémie**

126 **12 Number of leukocytes (200)**

127 Parasitaemia was considered low for parasite value $< 500 / ?l$ blood, moderate for values between 501 -5000
128 parasites / $?l$ blood and high for parasite value $> 5000 / ?l$ blood [17].

129 **13 e) Statistical analysis**

130 The data was entered into a work sheet using Microsoft® Excel 2010 and then analyzed using Epi Info? 7
131 (CDC, Atlanta). The association between bed net use as a preventive measure and sociodemographic factors was
132 analyzed using the Chi-2 test. Frequencies were calculated and presented in tables and charts. The results were
133 significant for a probability value $P < 0.05$.

134 **14 f) Administrative and ethical considerations**

135 Authorization was obtained at the University of Yaounde 1, signed by the Director of the school, the Head of
136 Department of Biological Sciences and the Research Supervisor. Authorization and clearances were also obtained
137 from the Ministry of Public Health Cameroon through the Directorate of the District Hospital of Biyem-Assi
138 and through the Rector of the University of Yaounde I. An informed consent form was read and signed by the
139 pregnant women. The information collected was treated confidentially. Only the members of the research team
140 and the health personnel in charge of the follow-up of these women had access to it. Women carrying parasites
141 were taken care of by the health care team at the health facility, in accordance with the recommendations of the
142 dedicated control programs.

143 **15 III.**

144 Results and Discussion a) Results

145 **16 i. Characteristics of the study population**

146 A total of 302 pregnant women were enrolled in this study. The participants included in this study were
147 predominantly Christian (295). They ranged in age from 17 to 53 with an average age of 25 ± 6 years. The
148 majority of participants were students (89, 30.27%), single (169, 56.52%), and had a university education (147,

149 48.84%) (Table ??). The participants in this study generally had a good knowledge of malaria. Indeed, the
150 majority had knowledge about transmission (94.79%), signs and symptoms (92.31%), consequences in children
151 under 5 years of age (83.84%), knowledge on consequences of malaria in pregnant women (90.35%), dangers of
152 malaria to society (88.10%), and preventive measures against malaria (97.93%) (Table ??).

153 Tableau 2: Knowledge on malaria transmission, consequences and prevention iii. Participants' perceptions of
154 the net as a preventive measure against malaria For the participants' perceptions of the net, this study revealed
155 that 22.33%, 33%, and 46.67% of participants rated the net (as a preventive measure against malaria) as excellent,
156 very good, and good, respectively (Fig. 1).

157 17 Malaria prevalence among pregnant women

158 There was a high prevalence of gestational malaria found in the study population (48.5%). Women aged 25-
159 34 years (48.45%), primiparous women (49.55%), those with a low level of education (60%), living in a poorly
160 sanitized environment (presence of puddles, water and bushes: 50.35%) and being in their first trimester of
161 pregnancy (58.49%) were the most affected by Plasmodium. The same was true for those living in wooden
162 houses (50%). Regular use of the net decreased the prevalence of malaria among the pregnant women in this study
163 although this difference was not significant (Table 3). Bed net ownership was influenced by the sociodemographic
164 characteristics of the participants in this study. Bed net ownership was high among pregnant women aged 25-34
165 years (147, 48.7%), multiparous women (157, 52.0%), University students (84, 27.8%), and women with a higher
166 levels of education (135, 44.7%) (Fig. 2).

167 18 Possession of mosquito bednets in relation to socio- 168 demographic characteristics

169 19 No Yes

170 Participants' employment status significantly ($P=0.04$) influenced bed net ownership. Thus, students/pupils
171 had high net ownership with a percentage of 31.23% compared to the formal/informal workers and housewives
172 (26.39%, 23.79% and 18.59%, respectively) (Fig. 3).

173 20 vi. Effect of mosquito bed net use on Plasmodium infection 174 in pregnant women

175 Participants who used the net had a Plasmodium infection rate of 53.49% (Table 4). Those using the rectangular
176 shape were heavily infested with a prevalence of 50.37% compared to pregnant women using the white color
177 (46.20%). The shape of the net significantly ($P=0.05$) influenced Plasmodium infection among participants
178 (Table 4). The overall use of the net by pregnant women who participated in this study was 53%. (Figure
179 4). The choice of net was influenced by several factors. Pregnant women chose the net because it was spacious
180 (39,74%), easy to install (41,72%), and comfortable and beautiful (18,52%) (Table 5). Several socio-economic
181 factors of participants influenced net use, although this was not significant. Christian women, unmarried women,
182 students, university students, and women aged 25-34 years had a higher rates of net use than their counterparts
183 (Table 6). IV.

184 21 Discussion

185 Malaria in pregnancy is a major public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa. It poses a risk to both the mother
186 and the fetus because it has a compromising effect on immunity in the latter [18]. Despite the poor implementation
187 of malaria prevention strategies, their use has a reasonable effect on malaria and pregnancy parameters. Thus,
188 gestational malaria is still a threat in our country. This study revealed a good knowledge of pregnant women
189 on the causes and complications of malaria and the benefit of using preventive means such as the impregnated
190 mosquito net, however the rate of net use was low.

191 The prevalence of gestational malaria has been reported throughout Africa and particularly in Cameroon
192 [16,19]. The overall prevalence of gestational malaria is 48.5% in this study. This is higher compared to the
193 39.2% reported in the Mount Cameroon area. This may be due to poor compliance with malaria preventive
194 methods; specifically the low use of the mosquito net which was 47.97% in the study conducted in Mount
195 Cameroon [20]. This prevalence is very high compared to the 7.90% and 6.60% found among pregnant women
196 living in rural [21] and urban [22] areas of Cameroon respectively. This result may be explained by the different
197 study areas, the type of study or the use of Intermittent Preventive Treatment with Sulphadoxine-Pyrimethanin
198 (IPT-SP). In rural areas, a prospective longitudinal study was conducted with a predominance of multiparous
199 women in the study population.

200 The prevalence of malaria is higher in younger pregnant women although this is not significant. This has been
201 similarly proven by previous studies conducted in the Littoral [16] and in South West Cameroon [19]. This is
202 because this group of pregnant women have not yet acquired specific pregnancy-related immunity that protects
203 them from gestational malaria. This provides a better understanding of their susceptibility to Plasmodium
204 falciparum. Consistent with previous studies, a poorly sanitized environment would influence the risk of malaria

205 infection [19,23]. These authors report that proximity to fields and/or puddles increased the occurrence of malaria
206 in pregnant women living in such environments.

207 Radio, television, and health centers were the main sources of information for the vast majority of participants
208 in this study about malaria and its dangers. The majority of nets were obtained during prenatal visits. This
209 finding is consistent with that conducted in Buea [24] where the primary source of nets for pregnant women had
210 been ANC. The most recurrent shapes and colors were rectangular shapes and white colors, respectively.

211 Occupation agreement with that of Dionne-Odom reported in Cameroon. In addition, the net use rate was
212 47.67%. This rate is high compared to the 16.9%, 26%, and 17% observed in Cameroon [25,26], Nigeria [27]
213 and Sub-Saharan Africa [28], respectively. A plausible explanation for this high net use could be the free
214 net distribution campaigns by Cameroon's Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE). In addition, the messages
215 regularly disseminated through the various media channels always by this ministry on the use of the impregnated
216 net as an effective means of malaria control have largely reached the populations. This is why the majority of
217 our participants had heard about the net on television and radio. However, this rate of net use is low compared
218 to that obtained in Buea (69.7%). Government action in easy accessibility justifies this proportion [24]. The
219 shape of the net significantly influenced Plasmodium infection. The rectangular shape was the most used by
220 participants in this study (268) for a malaria prevalence of 98.54% compared to 1.46% of infected participants
221 using a conical shape net. This is because it is more spacious and fits the bed better. However, some participants
222 preferred the conical shape because it was easier to install.

223 Given the high prevalence of malaria, net use is insufficient to significantly reduce malaria in this study
224 population.

225 Cultural beliefs or prejudices are often cited as potential barriers to the adoption of innovative health behaviors
226 and attitudes in Africa [29]. However, the results obtained in Cameroon indicate that, contrary to this idea,
227 cultural beliefs are not the real explanatory factors for non-use of LLINs. This result is in agreement with
228 those obtained in Niger [30]. However, education level is associated with net use. Women with at least secondary
229 education had a high rate of net use. This result is due to the fact that those who have attained at least secondary
230 school level are better able to read and understand messages on leaflets, radio, television. Thus, education remains
231 an effective platform for influencing the behavior of pregnant women to reduce malaria prevalence.

232 In addition, net use by participants was significantly reduced by personal reasons such as heat, choking,
233 burning, itching, and laziness to use the net. These findings corroborate those of previous studies conducted in
234 North Cameroon [31] and Ghana [32], respectively, which reveals heat and choking sensation as reasons preventing
235 net use by participants.

236 **22 V. Conclusion and Recommendations a) Conclusion**

237 This study revealed a high prevalence of parasitic infections (48.5%) in the study population.

238 Although not significant, the use of the net decreased the prevalence of malaria. However, the shape of the
239 net significantly influenced Plasmodium falciparum infection.

240 Color and reasons such as heat, discomfort, suffocation, itching, fatigue, and odor influenced net use by
241 pregnant women in the study. The color of choice for participants was white. Therefore, the shape and color
242 of the net should be taken into account during distribution campaigns, as it affects not only the choice but also
243 the use of the net. Awareness campaigns by the government and medical services would prioritize net use and
244 significantly reduce the prevalence of the parasite malaria in this area.

245 **23 b) Recommendations**

246 In order to reduce morbidity and even death related to this parasitic disease, namely malaria, it would be wise
247 for pregnant women to systematically sleep under a long-lasting impregnated mosquito net, despite the personal
248 considerations and difficulties they have with regard to the latter.

249 Governments could adopt effective methods for reducing malaria prevalence such as Intensification of
250 information, education and communication campaigns on malaria and its dangers among pregnant women.

251 In order to improve the use of impregnated mosquito nets, health officials should strengthen free distribution
252 at health centers.

253 There is the need to increase awareness about the correct and regular use of the treated net;

254 The production of conical nets could be reduced to rectangular shapes and the white color could be the most
255 predominant because it is the preference of pregnant women.

256 Author's contribution: JLNN Designed the work, participated in data collection, wrote and edited the
257 manuscript, NBHV participated in data collection, data analysis and wrote the draft of the manuscript, TCF
258 and FC contributed in data collection Declaration: All authors declare that there is no conflict of interest
259 Références Referencias

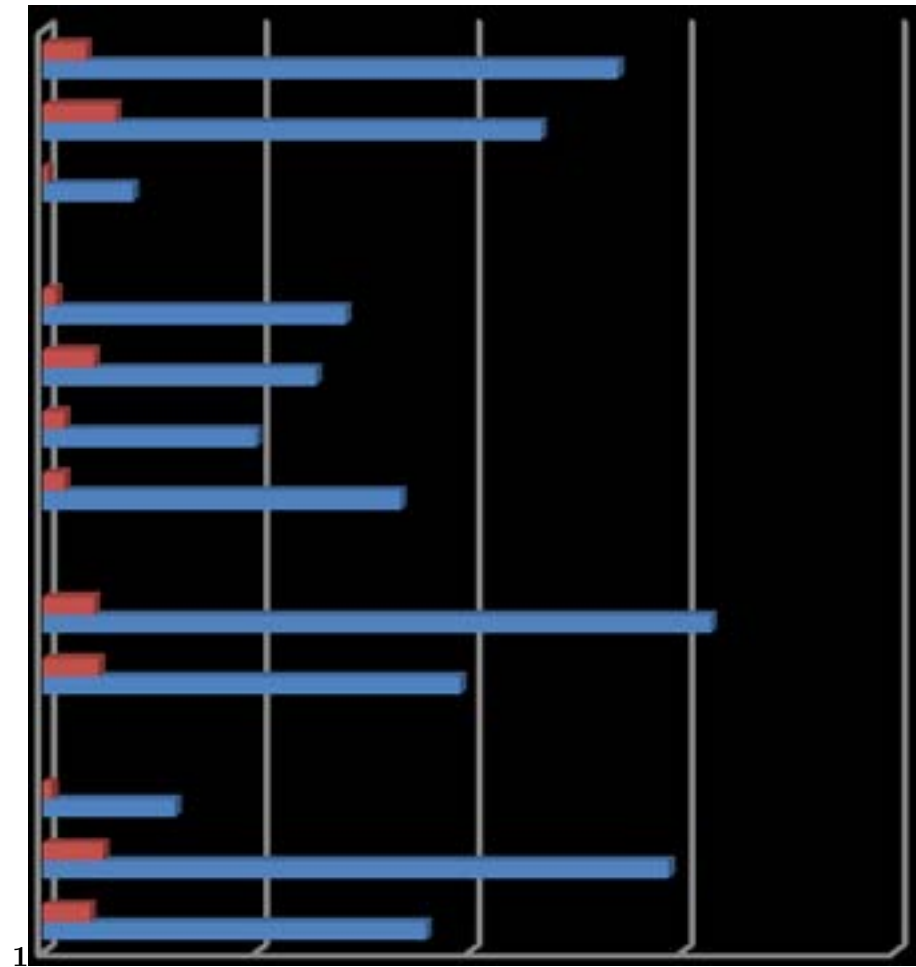


Figure 1: Figure 1 :

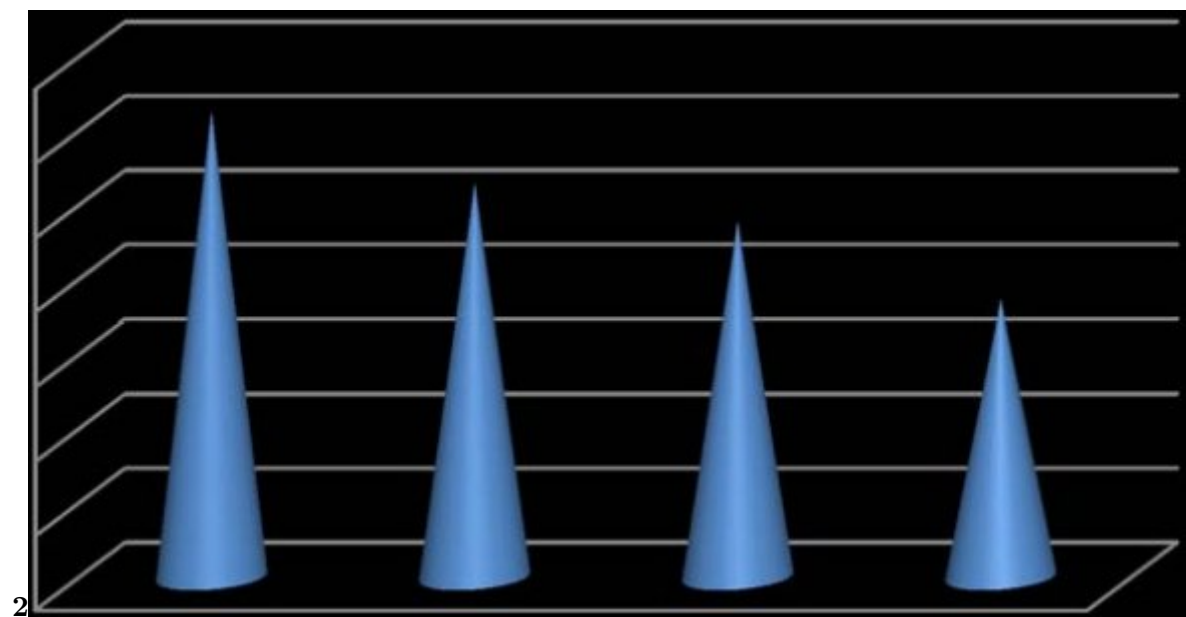
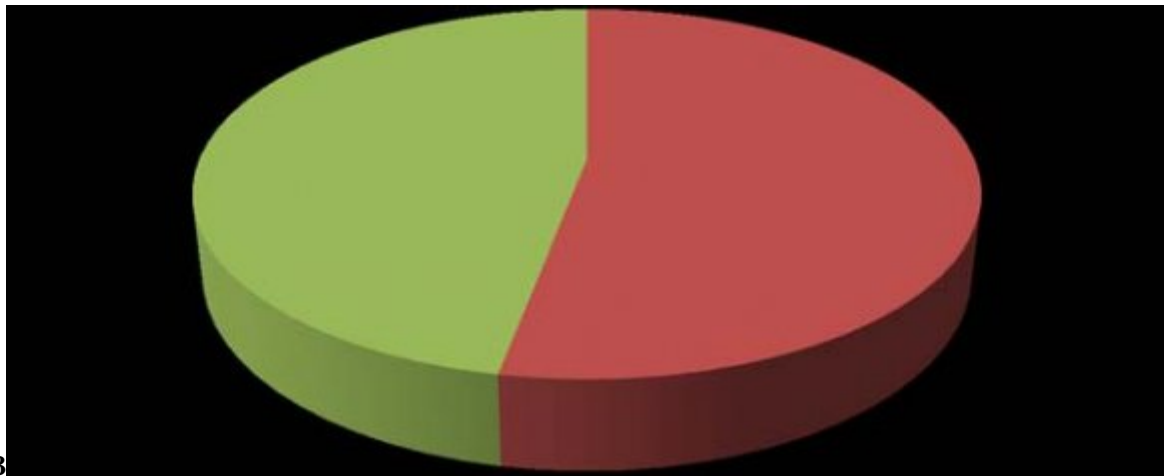


Figure 2: Figure 2 :



3

Figure 3: Figure 3 :

Characteristic	Categories	Number of people	Prévalence (%)
Knowledge on mode of transmission	Oui	273	94,79
	Non	15	5,21
Recognition of signs and symptoms	Oui	252	92,31
	Non	21	7,69
Knowledge on the consequences of malaria in children from 0-5 years	Oui	166	83,84
	Non	32	16,16
Knowledge on the consequences of malaria in pregnant women	Oui	206	90,35
	Non	22	9,65
Knowledge on the dangers of malaria to society	Oui	222	88,10
	Non	30	11,90
Knowledge on the prevention and control of malaria	Oui	284	97,93
	Non	6	2,07

Figure 4:

3

Characteristic	Categories	No. Sam-pled	No. In- fected	Prevalence (%)	? 2	P- valeur
Age (Years)	?25	101	49	48,51	1,23	0,74
	25-34	161	78	48,45		
	?35	33	16	48,48		
Parity	Primiparous	111 169	55 80	49,55 40,70	0,05	0,81
	Multiparous					
Age of pregnancy	Trimester 1	53	31	58,49	4,46	0,10
	Trimester 2	126	53	42,06		
	Trimester 3	120	61	50,83		
Profession	Students	89	43	48,31	0,14	0,98
	Housewives Formal workers	55 74	27 35	49,09 47,30		
	Informal workers	76	35	46,05		
Level of educa- tion	?Primary Secondary	20 134	12 61	60,00 45,52	1,61	0,44
	University	147	73	49,66		
Type of house	Wooden Block	8 289	4 141	50,00 48,79	0,004	0,94
Presence of bushes and flowers around houses ?	Yes	143	72	50,35	0,15	0,69
	No	154	73	47,40		

[Note: 2 : Chi Square P-valeur: level of significance v. Mosquito bed net Ownership among pregnant women]

Figure 5: Table 3 :

4

Characteristic	Category	Effectif No. sampled	No. In- fected	Prevalence (%)	? 2	P- valeur
Utilisation of mosquito bed nets	Yes	258	123	53,49	0,29	0,58
	No	43	23	47,67		
Form of the mosquito net	Conical	9	2	22,22	1,74	0,05\$
	Rectangular	268	135	50,37		
	White	171	79	46,20		
Coulour of the mosquito bed net	Blue	21	14	66,67	3,13	0,21
	Green	2	1	50,00		
? 2 : Chi Square	P-valeur : level of significance					

[Note: vii. Factors influencing the choice and utilisation of mosquito bed nets]

Figure 6: Table 4 :

5

Factor	Number sam- pled	Prevalence (%)	? 2	P- valeur
Spacious	120	39,74	4,46	0,18
Easy to install	126	41,72	0,06	
Beautiful and comfortable	56	18,54	1,11	
Total	302	100		

Figure 7: Tableau 5 :

6

Characteristic	Categories	Number Sampled	Prevalence (%)	? 2	P- valeur
Age	?25	83	32,81	1,96	0,37
	25-34	140	55,34		
	?35	30	11,86		
Marital sta- tus	Célibataire	143	55,89	0,15	0,29
	Mariée Chrétienne	113 252	44,14 98,83	0,99	0,08
Religion	Musulmane	5	1,18	1,34	0,71
	Elève-Etudiante	75	29,53		
	Ménagère	50	19,69		
Profession	Formel	64	25,20		
	Informel	65	25,59		

Figure 8: Table 6 :

Figure 9:

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