
EDITORIAL

Let's put a Stop to Non-Adherence to Treatment Guidelines in Clinical Practice

*Editorial by Orwa JA, PhD.
Editor-in-Chief*

The Ministry of Health, Kenya, continues to develop and regularly update National treatment guidelines for a number of disease conditions. However, in most cases these guidelines never reach the intended users, or if they do, the users most often than not keep them in drawers without attempting to make reference to them during prescription or clinical practice.

What could be the challenge? Is it that these guidelines are usually voluminous books that are not convenient to keep in the prescribers pockets or is it just non awareness or ignorance? It should be of great concern to the Ministry of Health that treatment guidelines are frequently not followed.

Standard treatment guidelines are designed to ensure that medications are administered in a safe, effective and economic manner, and are very powerful tools in promoting the rational use of medicines. Standard treatment guidelines help prescribers make decisions about appropriate treatments for specific clinical conditions. Non-adherence to clinical guidelines often leads to irrational use of medicines, which is not only unique to Kenya, but is also a global problem.

This practice may lead to serious consequences such as drug resistance, poor treatment outcomes, adverse drug reactions, increasing antimicrobial resistance and wastage of resources.

In Kenya, studies show that the proportion of prescribers that use or adhere to treatment guidelines is inadequate. The low level of adherence to treatment guidelines has been attributed to lack of awareness, unavailability, low levels of distribution of these guidelines despite availability of these published information at the National level for various ailments like Malaria, HIV, TB, Cancer and so forth.

A concerted approach is thus needed, involving all healthcare providers and stakeholders to heighten distribution, enhance training of healthcare providers and improve awareness on existing standard treatment guidelines. In addition, Kenya may need to invest in the development of user friendly technologies in order to contribute to achievement of universal access to quality health services.

