

**MEDIA ADVOCACY AND AWKA URBAN RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE  
TO THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study examines the media advocacy and Awka urban residents' attitude to the hepatitis B vaccine. This study employed a survey design. The study used a sample size of 384 respondents, simple random and multi-stage sampling technique to select the respondents was adopted. The questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. Statistical Package for social science (SPSS) version 19 was used to analyze the data. The study found that the majority of the Awka urban residents are not aware of the hepatitis B vaccine and that the majority of the respondents have not been vaccinated on the hepatitis B vaccine. The study concludes that the media is an essential tool to create awareness of certain health prevailing issues such as hepatitis B and its vaccine. Therefore, the media through its enlightenment campaign programs and the level of prominence given to any health discussion should stimulate the attitude of people towards acceptance of the vaccine.

**Keywords:** Mass media, Hepatitis B vaccine, Awka urban residents.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In sub Saharan African countries, Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a disease of global significance. Globally it is estimated that HBV is causing a significant burden in Africa. In Nigeria, which is one of the African countries is also hit by HBV but the estimates on the knowledge and awareness of the population on this virus and its vaccine is inconsistent. Thus the awareness,

knowledge and perhaps the preventive measures could be obtained through the mass media which is the fastest and quickest tool to disseminate information to people.

Onochie & Onah, (2021) stated that communication is centered on public health and the essence is for the sensitization or enlightenment. In other words, public awareness is being created to inform or educate the public on prevailing health issues. The mass media through its watch dog role creates awareness through health programmer on any health disease like HBV in other to eliminate it. According to Asogwa and Oluwakemi, (2017) when transmission of infection is not prevented, it kills just like the silent dreadful killer disease “Hepatitis B”. Thus the aim of this paper is to unravel the media advocacy and Awka urban Residents attitude on Hepatitis B vaccine.

## 2.0 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Communication is achieved through channels or mediums of communication. Public issues like health prevailing issues are passed across to the audience via communication mediums. The mass media through its various channels inform, educate and enlighten on health issues such as Hepatitis B and its vaccine and precautionary measures. Most times the indifference in understanding communication messages among people differs. This in most cases affects the acceptance of a message by people. Thus people’s hesitance on certain health vaccines could be as a result of how they understand what they see or hear through the mass media and this becomes a problem. In other words this study investigates the media advocacy and Awka urban residents’ attitude to Hepatitis B vaccine.

### 2.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the number of Awka urban residents that is aware of Hepatitis B vaccine.
2. To find out the sources of media exposure on Awka urban residents on Hepatitis B vaccine.
3. To examine Awka urban residents attitude on Hepatitis B vaccine.

### 2.2 Research Questions

Based on the foregoing objectives the following research questions were formulated

1. What number of Awka urban residents is aware of Hepatitis B vaccine?
2. What are the sources of media exposure on Awka urban residents on Hepatitis B vaccine?
3. What is the attitude of Awka residents on Hepatitis B vaccine?

## 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Hepatitis B an Overview

According to World health organization (WHO), (2012) Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by a virus (HBV), can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death. Hepatitis B means inflammation of the liver. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications and

certain medical conditions can all cause hepatitis. However, hepatitis B is often caused by a virus. Hepatitis B vaccine is available for all age groups. The Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all infants, all children or adolescents younger than 19 years of age who have not been vaccinated, all adults age 19 through 59, and adults age 60 years or older without known risk factors for Hepatitis B infection. Adults who are 60 years or older without known risk factors for Hepatitis B may also receive Hepatitis B vaccine. World health organization, (2017) posits that Hepatitis B is a potentially life threatening liver infection and it is a major global health problem.

The need for a safe and effective vaccine which offers 98% to 100% protection against Hepatitis B is of relevant importance in order to avert the development of complications including chronic disease and liver cancer. In most countries, the burden of hepatitis B infection is high. Countries like WHO western pacific region, where 116 million and 81 million people respectively are chronically infected (WHO, 2017). Sub Saharan Africa has one of the highest hepatitis B related liver cancer rates worldwide in which Nigeria is inclusive.

### 3.2 Symptoms of Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B in some people does not indicate any symptoms when newly infected. Some people have acute illness with symptoms that last several weeks, including yellow of the skin and eyes (Jaundice), dark urine, extreme fatigue, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain WHO, (2012). People with hepatitis B are sick for only a few weeks (known as acute infection) but for others the disease progresses to a serious lifelong illness known as chronic hepatitis B.

### 3.3 Hepatitis B Transmission

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications and certain medical conditions can all cause hepatitis. However, hepatitis is often caused by a virus. According to WHO (2017) Hepatitis B is spread when blood semen or other body fluid infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected or has not been vaccinated. People contract the virus from:

- Birth: Transmission from mother who has been infected with hepatitis B to her baby during birth.
- Sex with an infected partner who has hepatitis B.
- Sharing syringes, razor blade, needles or drug preparation equipment.
- Sharing of personal effects such as tooth brushes, medical equipment (like glucose monitor) with a person who has hepatitis B.
- Direct contact with the blood or open sores of a person who has hepatitis B.
- Exposure to the blood from a person who has hepatitis B through needle sticks or other sharp instruments.

There are certainly a great risk of death on people who contracted hepatitis B from birth in certain countries where hepatitis B is common such as people that do not take the vaccination, men who have sex with men, multiple sex partners or sex workers, people who inject drugs, people with HIV, sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B, pregnant women.

## 4.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Since the existence of Hepatitis, researchers have gone into research to examine, and analyze the types of hepatitis, the cause, symptoms and the diagnosis in order to reduce the disease. Nevertheless the focus of our review is to ascertain related literature on mass media advocacy on hepatitis B vaccine. Chan et al (2015), in their study on Kangtai vaccine crisis explored that the social media raised a great public attention and negative sentiments towards vaccination on internet in China. Findings from the results of the study show that the social media play invaluable role in enlightening people on Hepatitis B vaccine due to the fact that the social media is flooded with fake news that misinformed the populace.

In a study conducted by Alber et al (2018) an online survey was conducted with young Asian American adults aged 18-29 years old to better understand their health information seeking, social media usage and hepatitis B related behaviors and beliefs. Results indicated that the internet was the most common medium for health information. Yue et al (2018) examined the influence of the hepatitis B vaccine event on children's vaccination and public decision toward the vaccination. From their findings the public decision toward hepatitis B vaccination was influenced by incorrect information released by the media which created a negative impact on vaccine acceptance by people. The media in their own part sets agenda for the people on certain issues but people's indifference in understanding information varies. Sometimes the public may misunderstand the knowledge on related vaccination on hepatitis B reported by the media that caused that vaccine hesitancy. Yue and colleagues opine that the media should promptly provide more positive information and event interpretation based on serious rampaging diseases like hepatitis B and its prevention which includes being vaccinated so as to avoid vaccine hesitancy among the public.

Asogwa and Oluwakemi (2017) examined the media public enlightenment campaign and awareness of hepatitis B in Lokoja metropolis of Kogi state. The findings from the data they collected revealed that majority of the respondents 80.85% are aware of hepatitis B and 66.22% have knowledge of the disease through health workers, television, one on one communication. Majority of respondents knows that hepatitis B is infectious but few had gone for the vaccination of hepatitis B. The authors concluded that despite the awareness by various means of communication, the behavior of the people never changed. Thus the media need to come up with a powerful fear appeal message to force a change of behavior and opinion on people.

### 4.1 Media Advocacy

The centers for Disease control and prevention (CDC) in 2011 published updated recommendations for hepatitis B. From the research conducted by Chen et al on internet surveillance on hepatitis B by examining daily number of relevant online news article, sina weibo posts and Baidu search index during the crisis. The study found out that the Kangtai vaccine crisis raised great public attention convention on the essence of hepatitis B vaccination on internet in China. World Health Organization (WHO)

In a serious health disease like HBV, health information is necessary so as to prevent the wide spread of the disease. Here, the mass media should create enlightenment campaign to inform, educate people on the signs, symptoms, causes and safety measures to be adopted in order to

prevent the disease from escalating. Mass media campaign can raise awareness of an issue, enhance knowledge and beliefs and reinforce existing attitude Asogwa and Oluwakemi, (2017). According to chen et al (2015) public disputations affected vaccine rates particularly when adverse events occur. The vigorous development of internet in China provides an opportunity to observe public reaction and sentiment toward vaccination when Kangtai hepatitis B vaccine crises happened and evolved to a wide spread debate on the internet.

World Health Organization (WHO) launched an ambitious goal in 2015 to reduce hepatitis B infection by 90% and increase global vaccine coverage to 90% kheir (2022). To reach global goals on hepatitis B vaccine, the media through its programmers on health education is an important tool that can improve sensitization for hepatitis B prevention, screening and vaccination. As a matter of fact, the mass media is an essential tool to create awareness through enlightenment campaigns on hepatitis B vaccine in other to destabilize the attitude of the people's acceptance on the vaccination. Also through these campaigns on certain prevailing health issues such as hepatitis B, the vaccine safety issues can be reported by the media so as to help the public to have the knowledge and risk factor if not vaccinated.

## 5.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The study was anchored on Agenda Setting theory and Health Belief Model (HBM). The agenda setting theory was propounded by Maxwell Mcombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. According to Ukaegbu, (2018). The media have the ability to mentally order or organize the world for the people. This simply implies that the amount of prominence given to a particular issue or event by the media affects the level of importance the public will attach to it. In view of this, the way the media give attention to any health issue will determine how the public will take it as a serious discourse. Hepatitis B is a silent killer disease that needs quick precautionary measures in which if the various mass media give prominence to the relevance of taking the hepatitis B vaccine, it will certainly change the attitude or point of view of the public on the vaccine.

### 5.2 Health Belief Model (HBM)

This is a theoretical model that can be used to guide health promotion and disease prevention programmer. It is used to explain and predict individual changes in health behaviors. Relating this model to this study, it could be seen that any health decision or action taken by an individual depends on the belief of how the person perceives the importance of taking the right diagnosis of any disease so as to reduce the morbidity and mortality of the populace.

## 6.0 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using the survey approach. The population of this study is Awka Residents. The target Awka urban residents were predominantly traders, students, civil servants and drivers between the ages of 18 years and above. Awka urban has an estimated population of 167,738 (<http://world population review.com/countries/Nigeria-population/ cities>). A sample size of 384 was statistically determined for this study using online calculator for determining sample size; specifically, calculator net. The multistage sampling technique was

adopted for the study. At the first stage, 33 villages in Awka urban were divided into clusters with each cluster housing a number of villages. To ensure that every resident within the villages in the clusters had equal chance of being sampled, a simple random sampling technique was adopted using Statistical Random Numbers Table. Randomly each group in the population of study was assigned a number. From the numbers in the random numbers table, two groups, made up of 10(ten) villages were randomly chosen.

GROUP	VILLAGES
Ifite Awka	Enu-ifite, Ezinato-Ifite, Agbana Ifite
Agulu	Umuogbu, Umubele, Umuanaga, Umuike, Umujagwo, Umuenechi, Umuorukas

Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed only on respondents who were available at the time and showed willingness to be sampled, when the researchers visited each of the chosen villages. Thus out of the 400 copies of questionnaire structured and distributed each of the 10 villages in the two groups chosen, got 384 questionnaires from the respondents. Data gathered were presented and analyzed using SPSS 19 data analysis software.

## 7.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Research question one:** What numbers of Awka urban residents are aware of hepatitis B vaccine?

**Table 1: Respondents’ awareness on hepatitis B vaccine.**

variables	frequency	percentage
Aware	109	28
Not aware	160	42
Can’t say	115	30
Total	384	100

Responses from Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents are not aware of hepatitis B vaccine. However, hepatitis B vaccine could be seen as something which the Awka urban residents are not usually aware of. This implies that there is still very low awareness of hepatitis B vaccine in Awka urban. Thus if the media could increase the amount of prominence given to hepatitis B vaccine through their health programmers, it will help increase the hepatitis B vaccine campaign.

**Research question two:** What are the sources of media exposure on Awka urban residents on hepatitis B vaccine?

**Table 2: Respondents major media source of hepatitis B vaccine.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Radio/Tv news	96	25
Radio/Tv documentaries	19	5

Mobile public address systems/Town crier	14	3.7
Social media	10	2.5
Newspaper/Magazine news advertorial	10	2.5
Don't have access	235	61.3
Total	384	100

Response to table 2 show that the majority of Awka urban residents do have access to any of the sources while Radio/ TV are mostly their media sources of hepatitis B vaccine messages (25%). This correlates with the findings in Table 1 that there are still low hepatitis B vaccine campaigns in Awka urban residents.

**Research question three:** What is the attitude of Awka urban residents on hepatitis B vaccine?

**Table 3: Respondents who have been vaccinated.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Vaccinated	34	9
Not vaccinated	200	52
Not sure	150	39
Total	384	100

Response to table 3 show that the majority of Awka urban residents have not been vaccinated (52%) while (9%) of Awka urban residents have been vaccinated. From the findings of this result, it implies that there is still very low awareness of hepatitis B vaccine in Awka urban.

**8.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings from this study shows that majority of the respondents are not aware of Hepatitis B vaccine specifically, it shows that 42% of the respondents are not aware of the vaccine while 28% of the respondents are aware of hepatitis B vaccine. These findings confirm the assertion of (Asogwa and Oluwakemi, 2017) which states that the mass media through their campaign can raise the knowledge and awareness of hepatitis B vaccine to eradicate hepatitis B spread and the awareness of taking the vaccine.

Findings in table 2 indicated that majority of Awka urban residents (61.3%) do not have access to any media exposure on hepatitis B vaccine while 25% of the respondents got to know about hepatitis B vaccine through Radio/TV sources. This is in tandem with the findings of Yue et al (2018) on the influence of hepatitis B vaccine event on children’s vaccination and public decision towards hepatitis B vaccination was influenced by incorrect information released by the media which created a negative impact on vaccine acceptance by people. The authors are of the opinion that the media should promptly provide more positive information and event interpretation based on serious rampaging disease like hepatitis B and its diagnostic measures of taking the vaccine. This will help the populace from being aware of the vaccine and at the same time having the willingness to accept the vaccine. However, the finding in this study confirm with the Agenda setting theory which simply implies that the amount of prominence

given to a particular issue by the media will invariably affect the level of importance the public will attach to it. In other words, the level of prominence given to HBV by the media will certainly change the attitude of people on accepting the hepatitis B vaccine.

According to the analysis in table 3, indicated that majority of the respondents (52%) have not been vaccinated on HBV while just few of the respondents (9%) have been vaccinated. This finding is in line with Health Belief Model which asserts that the health decision or action taken by an individual depends on the belief of how the person perceives the importance of the health issues such as taking the Hepatitis B vaccine so as to reduce the mortality and morbidity of the populace. However, Asogwa and Oluwakemi (2017) examined the media public enlightenment campaign and awareness of hepatitis B in Lokoja metropolis of Kogi state, based on the findings it revealed that majority of the respondents are aware of hepatitis B through the media but few have gone for the vaccination. Thus the authors concluded that despite the awareness of hepatitis B by the various means of communication, the behavior of the people never changed as there is still a low rate of the respondents that have been vaccinated.

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

The mass media in no doubt is an essential tool to create awareness on certain health prevailing issues such as hepatitis B and its vaccine. Obviously, hepatitis B is a silent killer disease that should not be ignored but rather should be given priority attention by the media. The media through its enlightenment campaigns on health issues and the level of prominence given to any health discuss should stimulate the attitude of people to have the zeal to accept the hepatitis B vaccine so as to reduce the spread and date rate caused by hepatitis B. in other words, all forms of mass medium should be used in sensitization campaign on Hepatitis B vaccine.

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