

Supply Chain Management and Access to Essential Medicines by Health Units in Wakiso District

There is acute shortage of essential medicines, or they may not be readily accessible at the time when they are needed in the health units, yet stocks expire when not put to proper utilisation in time, either in the national stores or in health units, which translates into a huge gap between the need (demand) for drugs and their level of supply at the districts and health unit level. This study aimed at investigating the relationship between the following drug supply chain components; selection, procurement, distribution, and management support, and access of the essential medicines by health units in Wakiso district. The study design was based on the qualitative and quantitative approaches to establish the cause-and-effect relationships and it also involved a cross sectional survey method to gather data from the sample of the population at that particular time. The data were presented and analysed using graphical and statistical methods, including the Pearson correlation coefficients for describing in quantitative terms the degree to which variables are related and the results were then extrapolated to the entire population. 116

The study found a positive association between procurement and access; that distribution has a positive relationship with access; a positive relationship between management support and access and no significant empirical support for a positive relationship between selection and access of medicines by health units in Wakiso district. This was explained by the fact that selection is a passive activity for health units because these facilities base their needs on the carefully selected lists (STG & EDLU), which are predetermined by government. The study recommends that government; undertakes capacity building and supportive supervision by training, managing and motivating more health workers and to enhance skills in medicines management, procurement, distribution and rational use of medicines; puts in place measures for strengthening government health systems from the top to the bottom of the health system, and integrating government's vertical programme supply systems; pays more attention to forecasting and quantification of drug requirements and doing them accurately to guarantee adequate supply and to minimise wastage (oversupply, expired stock), and incidences of stock outs or undersupply; provides adequate financing of the health sector to ensure adequate and regular supply of medicines to the health units. It is also necessary to increase the ability of managers at the district level in planning and financial management; embarks on review of inflexible policies such as those that limit the National Medical Store's procurement flexibility and capacity. These and other policy measures recommended in the study should improve Supply Chain Management (SCM) effectiveness and efficiency and access of medicines by government health facilities, hence, enhance health outcomes and improve peoples' lives.

Key Words: Supply Chain, Management, Access, Essential Medicines, Health Units, Wakiso District