

Behind the hidden epidemic of chronic hepatitis B in Ghana

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Impact of the Dissertation

This section discusses the social value of the findings of the dissertation. Here, the emphasis is placed on the relevance of the project, the target groups, including the various organisations the findings will be of interest to beside the scientific community. Further, implications for future research and interventions are discussed.

The findings of this dissertation are very useful considering the resolution by the World Health Assembly to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030 (WHO, 2016). More broadly, the findings add to the body of knowledge that explains hepatitis B testing behaviours, barriers to care and treatment for hepatitis B, disclosures concerns of PWHB, and hepatitis B related stigma. Given the paucity of evidence on hepatitis B related issues in Ghana, the findings of this dissertation serve as baseline data for future studies. Also, the finding of this dissertation underscores the importance of increasing hepatitis B knowledge and reducing hepatitis B stigma as part of efforts to encourage hepatitis B testing in Ghana given that, by 2030, 90% of PWHB are targeted to be diagnosed (WHO, 2016). To optimise testing, interventions that could improve hepatitis B knowledge and reduce stigma is important from the findings of this dissertation.

The findings also provide evidence to guide the development of hepatitis B awareness campaign programme and stigma reduction interventions in Ghana. The need for the aforementioned interventions is necessitated by the innovative discovery of incorrect beliefs about the aetiology of hepatitis B that act as barriers to care engagement and also contribute to hepatitis B stigma in Ghana.

The findings of this dissertation are of interest to several organisations and agencies working in the area of viral hepatitis. First, the Ministry of Health needs evidence of this nature to support its core function (i.e., policy formulation). The findings of this dissertation will therefore be useful for policy development and programme design by the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Services, National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme, and the Ministry of Education. In fact, future review of the existing guidelines on prevention, care, and treatment of viral hepatitis B can be guided by the findings of this dissertation. Also, policies and guidelines for hepatitis-related issues that pertain to Africans often developed by international organisations, including WHO and the World Hepatitis Alliance can be guided by the findings of this dissertation to ensure that cultural relevance is considered in all proposed interventions.

Further, the findings will be useful to civil society organisations, particularly Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) providing hepatitis B related services in Ghana. It would serve as evidence for advocacy, programme design, counselling, and intervention development.

Future research should use the intervention mapping (IM) approach to develop a theory-based intervention that can increase hepatitis B awareness and reduce hepatitis B stigma in the Ghanaian context. The IM protocol must inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of the interventions.