A Community Health Worker Program for the Prevention of Malaria in Eastern Kenya
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Abstract:
Objective: To assess whether the development and implementation of a community health worker (CHW) project in rural Kenya was associated with an increase in knowledge about malaria and the use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) in children under five years of age.

Methods: A baseline knowledge and behavior questionnaire, adopted from the Kenyan Demographic Health Survey, was conducted in August 2007 by Kenyan health officials in 75 villages. Two CHWs were chosen from each village and trained in appropriate use of ITNs. The CHWs provided educational sessions and ITNs to mothers in their respective villages. A follow-up survey was conducted in March 2008 of all families with children less than five years of age within randomly selected villages. The main questions addressed during the follow-up survey included knowledge about malaria and the practice of correctly using ITNs.

Findings: There were 267 surveys compiled for knowledge assessment before the intervention and 340 in the post-intervention analysis with an approximate 99% family participation rate. Of the families surveyed, 81% correctly knew the cause for malaria before the study and 93% after the CHW intervention (p < 0.01). Of those surveyed before the intervention, 70% owned and correctly used mosquito nets compared with 88% after the CHW intervention (p < 0.01).

Conclusions: There was a significant increase in knowledge about malaria and use of ITNs after the implementation of the CHW program.