

Caregivers' Knowledge and Home Management of Fever in Children

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Abstract

Background: Fever is one of the most common complaints presented to the Paediatric Emergency Unit (PEU). It is a sign that there is an underlying pathologic process, the most common being infection. Many childhood illnesses are accompanied by fever, many of which are treated at home prior to presentation to hospital. Most febrile episodes are benign. Caregivers are the primary contacts to children with fever. Adequate caregivers' knowledge and proper management of fever at home leads to better management of febrile illnesses and reduces complications.

Objective: To determine the caregivers' knowledge and practices regarding fever in children.

Design: A cross-sectional study.

Setting: Paediatric Emergency Unit at Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH)

Subjects: Two hundred and fifty caregivers of children under 12 years presenting with fever in August to October 2011 to the PEU.

Results: Three quarters of the caregivers' defined fever correctly. Their knowledge on the normal body was at 47.6%. Infection was cited as the leading cause of fever (95.2%). Brain damage (77.6%) and dehydration (65.6%) were viewed as the most common complication. Fever was treated at home by 97.2% of caregivers, most of them used medication.

Conclusions: Fever was defined correctly by 75.2% of the study participants and a majority of them used touch to detect fever. Fever was managed at home with medications. Public Health Education should be implemented in order to enlighten caregivers on fever and advocate for the use of a clinical thermometer to monitor fever at home.