



ID der Kurzfassung : 208

Psychological impact and perceived mpox risk among frontline healthcare workers during early epidemic phase, Uganda, August–September, 2024

Inhalt

On July 24, 2024, Uganda confirmed its first mpox outbreak, with initial cases detected in Kasese and Mayuge Districts. As a newly emergent disease, mpox posed unfamiliar clinical and operational challenges for healthcare workers (HCWs), whose limited experience and stigma surrounding the illness risked eroding confidence and undermining psychological well-being. To guide tailored support measures, we assessed risk perception and psychological distress among HCWs. We conducted a cross-sectional study during August–September 2024. Self-administered questionnaires were filled out by consenting day-shift HCWs: sociodemographic, occupational behaviors, perceived risks, and psychological distress variables. We determined the prevalence of psychological distress as the proportion of HCWs with a General Health Questionnaire score >12 . A higher score from the 25 concern statements signified a higher degree of risk perception. We identified associated factors using modified Poisson regression. Overall, 339 HCWs participated at an 80% response rate; 215 (63%) were female, and 253 (75%) were aged 18–35 years. HCWs, 208 (61%), reported a moderate level of perceived risk. The prevalence of psychological distress was 26% ($n=88$, 95%CI=17–35%). Moderate perceived mpox risk ($aPR=10$, 95%CI=2.5–37) and high perceived risk ($aPR=14$, 95%CI=3.6–56) were associated with psychological distress. HCWs lacking infection prevention and control (IPC) confidence ($aPR=1.2$, 95%CI=1.0–1.5) and those without a clear health facility IPC plan ($aPR=1.3$, 95%CI=1.1–1.6) had increased likelihood of psychological distress. Psychological distress was common among HCWs during the study period, driven by perceived mpox risk and inadequate IPC measures. There's a need to combine mental health support with strengthened IPC protocols through hands-on training and clear operational guidelines to protect HCW well-being and maintain uninterrupted service delivery during mpox and future outbreaks.

Keywords

Mpox, Risk perception, Psychological distress, Mental health, Uganda

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No, I am not a Junior Scientist.

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