

Gender Differentials in Surgical Uptake: A Case Study on TT Outreach Surgery in Pwani and Mtwara Regions, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Trachomatous Trichiasis (TT) is the inward turning of the eyelashes, which scratch the eyeball to cause irreversible blindness. IMA World Health (IMA) is an International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) member implementing the SAFE (surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness, and environmental change) strategy to eliminate Trachoma in Tanzania. As part of project implementation, IMA organizes outreach surgical camps after training case finders who conduct household screenings for TT. Case finders identify patients in need and invite them to surgical camps to examine TT and receive surgery from a program-trained surgeon. Previous studies have not assessed the differences in surgical uptake between men and women; therefore, IMA employed data from the SAFE program to conduct studies. The study aims to understand gendered differences in surgical uptake and have an in-depth understanding of why a particular gender might have a higher or low surgical uptake than the other for improving program coverage. During the surgical camp held in July 2020 through March 2020, a total of 260 men and 727 women were confirmed with TT; out of those, 167 (64.2%) men and 471 (64.8%) women accepted surgery, whereas 37.8% and 44.6% males and females respectively refused any service. Analysis shows no significant gender differences in surgical uptake. Therefore, measures to improve surgical coverage should not necessarily focus on gender-specific approaches.

