

# **Health Care Options and Factors Influencing Health Seeking Behavior in a Rural Nigerian Community**

## **Background**

Rural dwellers have been reported to combine traditional African medicine (TAM) with orthodox care. They sometimes fail to utilize health facilities in their communities. due to a perceived clash of western medicine with their cultural beliefs.

## **Research questions**

What are the socioeconomic factors associated with health seeking practices of rural dwellers in a developing country setting?

## **Methodology**

A cross-sectional analysis of secondary data of a sample of 380 residents of Utese, a rural community in Edo State, Nigeria. A structured, interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data on socio-demographic, and health seeking characteristics of the respondents. SPSS version 25.0 software was used for univariate and bivariate analysis. A chi square test was used to find the association between respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and options for health care. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## **Results**

Comparable proportions (43.4%, 42.9%) of the respondents fell within the younger age categories of 10-29 and 30-49 years, respectively. Self-reported factors influencing choice of health care were: Promptness (41.8%), cost (22.4%), professionalism (16.8%), distance (15.8%), and cultural belief (3.2%). Patent medicine store was the most utilized source of health care (42.1%). 140 (36.8%) respondents sought health care in hospital. There was a significant association between duration of residence ( $p=0.04$ ), educational attainment (0.02) and healthcare options utilized.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Less than half of rural dwellers make use of minimum standard health care mainly due to duration of residence and perception of promptness. Proper education is key to healthcare utilization decision making in rural communities.