Assessment of environmental risk factors exposed to children below five years of age in Naivasha Day Care Centres

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ABSTRACT

Increase in maternal employment over the past 25 years has led to an increase in reliance on child care for young children from birth to 5 years of age. Non parental child care is now the norm for young children on a regular basis, with at least 44% of infants in child day care for more than 30 hours a week. Economic deprivation has led mothers especially in low income residential areas in Naivasha to return to work soon after delivery and since they do not have enough money to hire house helps they leave their children in substandard day care centres whose facilities may not be conducive for health. This move has raised questions on the environmental health risks associated with the care of the children. The broad objective of this study was to identify potential environmental risk factors exposed to children within day-care centres in Naivasha Municipality Kenya. The study entailed a cross sectional survey that comprised of 300 children in 10 day care centres. All the children’s anthropometric measurements were taken. Ten children who had been in the day care for more than 2 months were randomly picked from each day care centre making a total of 100 children. Their mothers gave data about their socioeconomic status and the children’s health status while childcare providers in the day care centres gave data on the daycares operation and activities. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and observation schedule. Secondary data from medical reports and demographic health surveys was used to obtain the prevalence of environmental related diseases among children under five in Naivasha area. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation. Results indicated that 50% of the daycares had an average of 20 children crowded in one room contrary to required standards. 80% of the sampled daycares did not have adequate lighting and ventilation of at least 50 lux of light at each floor level. 50% of the daycares managed their wastes appropriately. 90% used mobile phone for communication; none had a fire extinguisher and First Aid kit. 90% of the day care playgrounds had rubbish, sharp objects, and holes in the play area, 80% had animal and human waste, and 30% had water puddles, while 70% were on the road side and accessible to the driveway. Most (60%) of the children were reported to have had diarrhoea, 59% upper respiratory diseases, 5% malaria and 6% Ringworm. There was a significant correlation between the number of environmental risks in the daycare and the number of diseases experienced by the children. The daycares did not fully comply to required standards, diarrhoea was positively correlated to presence of soap and bowl for washing hands. There are no specific regulations to guide those who want to set up daycare centres. The state should provide laws and regulations to govern day care facilities.