Patient Perceptions of Clinical Eye Care and Alternative Treatment in Ghana
Anthony Formicola; Richard Wamai, Ph.D.

Opportunity
An important research direction for eye care in Ghana is patient perceptions of clinical and alternative treatment, since alternative eye care methods can be neutral or detrimental to health and vision\(^\text{1-4}\). In this study, surveys were administered to 108 attendees of eye clinic outreaches across 19 locations in Ghana during Oct-Dec 2017.

Background: Globally, eye diseases cause 61.4 million DALYs\(^5\); sub-Saharan Africa bears a disproportionate burden\(^6\).

Purpose: Surveys questioned participants about their utilization of clinical eye care, barriers to care, and perceptions of clinical and alternative treatment.

Methods
The survey included 48 questions across 3 themes:
- Utilization of clinical eye care
- Barriers to care
- Perceptions of clinical and alternative treatment

Simple Poverty Scorecard was administered, and participants were sorted into three SES scores (high, medium, low) and by geographical region (Eastern, Western, Northern). For significance tests, Fisher’s exact tests were used.

Results
Overall: Average age was 57.3 years; 61.1% female. 87.0% said they would elect a clinical provider if they had trouble seeing. Nearly all said they would discourage others from using a traditional herbalist or spiritualist. 88.0% did not believe eye treatment without the doctor’s advice would be beneficial.

By SES: At a significantly higher rate than the high-SES group (25% vs. 5.6%; \(p=0.0457\); see ** on graph), low-SES group would not elect to visit a clinical provider if they had trouble seeing.

By region: At a near-significantly higher rate than the N\(^\circ\) group (21.1% vs. 3.7%; \(p=0.0687\); see * on graph), W\(^\circ\) group would not elect to visit a clinical provider if they had trouble seeing.

Impact
Value Added: The unique feature about this research is that it addresses the positive effects of clinical eye care outreaches. This addresses the problem of alternative eye care and its unintended negative effects.

Conclusions: Results suggest that:
- Attendees of eye clinic outreaches in Ghana have positive perceptions of clinical eye care and negative perceptions of alternative treatment.
- Perceptions are mediated by SES and region.
- Social disapproval is present and works to discourage alternative treatment utilization in these communities.
- Overall, the study validates the positive impact of eye care outreaches on perceptions of care.

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