

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Global Program for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) was launched in 2000 by the World Health Organization to eliminate the disease by 2020. This program's key objective is to interrupt the transmission of LF through Mass Drug Administration (MDA). However, despite the large-scale implementation of MDAs in endemic countries, the disease is still a public health problem in 49 countries worldwide. The objective of this study was to explore factors associated with the acceptability of MDA for LF among communities in the Bole District in 2020.

Methods: This was a qualitative study using phenomenology and narrative approach. IDIs and KIs were conducted in Bole District with study participants selected using stratified purposive and critical case sampling techniques. Data were collected in the form of audio recording, transcribed into English, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Terms emerging from the data were coded and classified into sub-themes and themes using NVivo version12.

Results: The results showed that communities and drug distributors have poor knowledge of LF and MDAs, and this affects their perception of risk and decision to accept the drug or not. Belief in the effectiveness of the drugs through its preventive and curative effect was the positive perceptions of the MDAs. In contrast, skepticism about its purpose and the effectiveness of the drugs were unfavorable perceptions. Drug contraindications, low perception of risk, mistrust regarding the drug, inappropriate timing of distribution, side reactions, and ineffective communication were some of the barriers cited by participants. The main enabling factors found were health education on LF and MDA awareness, community involvement, readjustment of the distribution schedule, and improving distributor motivation.

Conclusion: There is the need for more health education on LF and MDA to enhance community involvement and ensure the program's better acceptability.