



Regulatory Interventions Can Improve Geographical Access to Pharmaceutical Services in a Developing Country

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Introduction

Developing countries worldwide lack adequate pharmaceutical services, especially in remote and rural areas, which can be attributed to the lack of pharmaceutical facilities and personnel in such areas.

Therefore, by extension, improving geographical access to pharmaceutical facilities is key to improving access to medicines and pharmaceutical services. Most medicine supply outlets tend to be located in busy urban shopping centres where profits are nearly guaranteed, so the problem of poor geographical access is more acute in sub-Saharan Africa.

Problem Statement

There is poor distribution of pharmacies throughout Ghana, with three cities (Accra, Kumasi, and Sekondi-Takoradi) alone having over 85% of all pharmacies in the country.

Objective

To examine the impact of a regulatory intervention restricting the opening of new shops to a distance of not less than 400 meters apart on the distribution of pharmaceutical services and by extension on geographical access to medicines.

Methodology

Analysis of data from primary records of the Pharmacy Council was performed. Data for the analysis were extracted from pharmacy application records, the Pharmacy Council Gazette 1990, and the Pharmacy Council Gazette 2003. The analysis was carried out by examining and calculating frequencies or percentages where appropriate.

Results

In 1989, there were 333 pharmacies in Ghana, of which 21 (6.31%) were located in non-urban areas. Following the intervention, there was a marked increase in the number of pharmacies in non-urban areas; thus, in 2002, there were 160 out of a total of 831 (19.23%) pharmacies located in non-urban areas.



Conclusion

Regulatory interventions can improve geographical distribution of pharmacies and enhance access to medicines.

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