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Stigma, mental health & NTDs: A case study of Liberia**Jerry Kollie***UL-PIRE, Liberia*

Statement of the problem: Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a group of long-lasting transferrable ailments affecting more than a billion people globally. Hard code evidences showed a link between NTDs, debility, and mental illness. Mental Health conditions are among the biggest contributors to the burden of diseases globally by 2030 and so, it is worth concentrating on how to institute measures aimed at addressing them as they have the potential of creating economic burdens as well. Our review suggests that NTDs predispose individuals to poor mental health with stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, reduced access to healthcare and social services, lack of educational, and exclusion from income generation and employment opportunities as well restrictions from exercising civil and political rights. These are all features of NTDs but these patients mental health status have not been considered and thus, raises concerns for lots of opportunities for broader researches especially by psychiatrists and psychologists.

Methodology & theoretical orientation: A participatory qualitative methods (body mapping, social mapping and in-depth interviews) provided space for persons affected by NTDs to narrate their experiences. Surveys conducted explored experiences of common mental health conditions among persons affected by skin NTDs.

Findings: Our findings show that Disability was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety. An interface amid disability and being a women amplified frequency of risk ratio of depression. In alignment with qualitative findings, persons affected experienced additional financial disquiets, stigma and pain and physical symptoms, to varying degrees, which contributed towards their mental distress, and mental health conditions.

Biography

Jerry Kollie, a Liberian Physician Assistant and Public Health Specialist, is a research fellow for the Clinical Epidemiology and Laboratory Systems Strengthening (REDRESS) program. He trained at the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts (TNIMA) and has extensive clinical and administrative experience in maternal health, nutrition, reproductive health, family planning, and human resource development and management.