

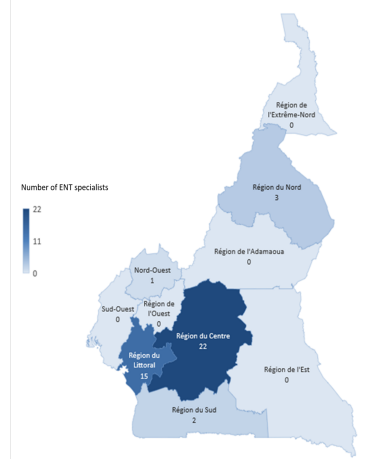
Geographic Availability of Resources Needed for the Practice of Rigid Esophagoscopy in Cameroon: A National Survey

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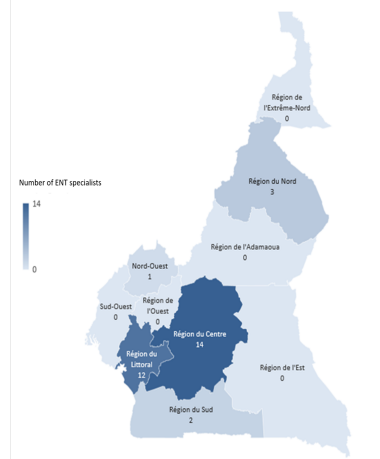
Background

Rigid esophagoscopy (RE) is a standards surgical procedure performed by ear-nose-throat specialists (ENTs) in diagnosing and monitoring cancers and extracting pharyngeal and esophageal foreign bodies (EFB). RE requires qualified human resources and available and functional equipment to ensure optimal results and prevent complications. Ideally, these resources should be equitably distributed to enable universal coverage of ENT services in general and specific management of esophageal foreign bodies in particular. The WHO proposed a comprehensive list of resources necessary to provide baseline care in various fields, including essential equipment for ENT care. Due to the reported burden of ENT conditions in general and upper airway foreign bodies in particular, esophagoscopy equipment was included in this list. Many studies have been conducted worldwide to investigate human resources and ENT surgery equipment availability.

Geographic distribution of ENTs with rigid esophagoscopy equipment available in Cameroon



Geographic distribution of ENTs with functional rigid esophagoscopy equipment in Cameroon



We received completed questionnaires from 75 ENTs out of the 92 sent, with a response rate of 82%. In the Center Region, 22 participants (51%) reported having RE equipment. This was followed by the Littoral Region with 15 participants (34%), three participants (7%) in the North Region, two (5%) in the South Region and one (2%) in the North West Region. None of the ENT specialists practicing in the Adamawa, East, West, Far North, or South-West regions had RE equipment (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows that this equipment was functional for 14 participants (44%) in the Center Region, 12 participants (38%) in the Littoral region, three (9%) participants in the North Region, two participants (6%) in the South Region and one participant (3%) in the North-West region..

Results

Aim

This study investigated the availability and characteristics of resources needed to perform RE in Cameroon.

Conclusion

There is an unequal distribution of human and material resources necessary for the practice of RE across the ten regions of Cameroon. These resources remain concentrated in the country's two major cities, making treatment and access to care for patients with EFB in the rest of the country challenging. The Cameroonian government and its partners must make concerted efforts to increase the recruitment of specialists, ensure better distribution of the few available resources, and enhance equipment provision to all ENT departments. Health institutions should put more effort into ensuring better maintenance of limited resources.

Methods

It was a cross-sectional survey of ENTs working in Cameroon. The questionnaire consisted of 13 items, including information on participants' occupational profiles and the existence and status of other human and material resources required for the practice of RE. It was administered online using participants' email addresses and phone contacts. Participation in this survey was voluntary; informed consent of ENTs was obtained, and a reminder was sent weekly by email or phone. If necessary, we met some specialists to collect their responses. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 20.0.

References

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