

Activities in Namibia to limit the impact of COVID-19 versus Europe and Iran and the implications for the future

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(Accepted for a poster presentation FIS/ HIS 2020 Conference)

Introduction and aims: Considerable differences in prevalence and mortality rates from COVID-19, with higher rates among European countries and Iran versus African and Asian countries in part due to early and extensive prevention measures. There has been considerable controversy surrounding hydroxychloroquine, with resultant misinformation increasing prices and suicides. Growing concerns also with unintended consequences of lockdown and other measures. Consequently, a need to investigate changes in utilisation and prices of relevant medicines during the pandemic in Namibia with its proactive approach to guide future decision making. Community pharmacists play a key role in this respect. **Methods:** Questionnaire survey among 55 pharmacists from March to end June 2020. **Results:** Proactivity among some pharmacists to plan for the pandemic with increased stocks. Limited increases in utilisation of antimalarials and antibiotics in Namibia versus other countries enhanced by restrictions on self-purchasing in Namibia, reflected in limited price rises and shortages. Higher use of Vitamin C/ immune boosters in Ghana and Nigeria versus Namibia reflected in higher price rises, with increased utilisation and prices of PPE across all countries. Encouragingly lower increases in herbal medicines in Namibia versus Ghana. Concerns though with unintended consequences. **Conclusion:** Encouraging to see continued low prevalence and mortality rates from COVID-19 in Namibia and limited increase in utilisation of antimalarials and antibiotics with prescribing restrictions. Concerns with rising rates of malaria and other infectious diseases following lockdown need addressing. Pharmacists can help plan for the future, educate the public during pandemics, help with vaccinations and general medicines management.