

Demographic characteristics and outcomes of paediatric burns at a large referral centre in Blantyre, Malawi.

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Paediatric burns cause significant morbidity and mortality in low income countries with WHO estimating 95% of all burn mortalities to occur here. However, little is known of its epidemiology in Malawi, a low income country in Africa; which may negatively impact on burn prevention strategies and resource allocation for management.

The aim of this retrospective study was to determine the demographic characteristics of all under 14 year old acute burns admissions to Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital burn unit in Malawi and find factors predicting mortality between January 2010 and December 2014.

Review of 481 patient files was done and data captured included patient age, sex, burn etiology, first aid, total burn surface area(TBSA), presence of epilepsy and outcome. This was analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft excel.

Findings included an overall male: female ratio of 1: 1.03 which shows no gender predilection. Median age of 3 years with 78% of patients under 5years old which is consistent with findings from many studies. Mean total burn surface area was 15.3%. Scalds, as is seen globally, were the leading cause of burns contributing 66% of all causes.

5% were epileptic with 71 % males. 21% of the epileptic children had sustained a previous burn. Mortality rate was 27%. TBSA, patient age and patient epileptic status were significantly predictive of mortality with p values of 0.000, 0.000 and 0.006 respectively (99% confidence interval). Burns greater than 40% TBSA were fatal.

As most burns are preventable, educating people on prevention and epilepsy control is vital.

Key Words

Paediatric burns, demographic characteristics, burn outcome

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