

## ABSTRACT

Course	Health Innovation	Name	Biennu Salim Camara
Thesis Title	Health-seeking behaviours for febrile illnesses post-Ebola virus disease outbreak in Guinea: Case of children under five years in malaria endemic zone		
<b>Abstract of Master's Dissertation</b> <b>Objective :</b> The 2013-2015 Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in Guinea led to community mistrust in the Health System. People consequently refrained from attending health facilities fearing to be considered EVD case or to be contaminated with the virus. This might have been pronounced for febrile illnesses since fever is one of the main symptoms of the EVD. As such, it could be particularly detrimental for malaria patients who are predominantly children in Guinea. While the EVD outbreak is over in Guinea, communities might still suffer its related fear. In this regard, the objective is to assess whether EVD memories control post-outbreak health-seeking behaviours for febrile illnesses in children under five years in Guéckédou district, Guinea.  <b>Methods :</b> This was a mixed methods study conducted using facility data, survey data, and in-depth interview data. Data were collected from the EVD's most affected sub-district (Guèndembou) and a less affected sub-district (Bolodou) of Guéckédou district. Facility data were collected on all children under five years attending the selected health centres in 2012, 2015, and 2017 to assess trends of facility attendance for fever and malaria across the pre-EVD, EVD, and post-EVD periods. Caregivers of febrile children in the selected sub-districts were then surveyed to assess their EVD-related fears and post-EVD health-seeking behaviours. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with caregivers to explore the reasons for their post-EVD health-seeking behaviours.			

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<p><b>Results :</b></p> <p>There was significant decline in the monthly median number of fever cases in Guèndembou, from 40 in the pre-EVD period to 31 during the EVD period, followed by an increase to 52 cases in the post-EVD (P=0.021) period. Meanwhile, in Bolodou, no significant change was seen for this indicator across the same periods.</p> <p>Overall, 398 were surveyed (196 in Guèndembou and 202 in Bolodou). The mean of caregivers' fear scores related to EVD was significantly higher in Guèndembou (3.0; 95% CI: 2.6–3.4) than in Bolodou (2.0; 95% CI: 1.8–2.1). More caregivers sought care in Guèndembou (81%) than in Bolodou (69%; P=0.007). Residing in Guèndembou (<math>\beta=0.555</math>; SE=0.240; P=0.020) was positively associated with seeking care.</p> <p>Though this was not statistically significant, caregivers with a fear score above the median and those who reported families' or friends' death due to EVD were more likely to seek care. Qualitative data showed that perception of the post-EVD health system (i.e., perceived risk of EVD contamination at a health centre, belief in health staff, and perceived health service quality), post-EVD socio-economic status, and illness interpretation were the main factors affecting post-EVD health-seeking behaviours for under-five febrile illnesses.</p> <p><b>Conclusion :</b></p> <p>In the Guéckédou district of Guinea, health facility attendance for under-five febrile illnesses has recovered to pre-EVD levels; however, EVD memories still control community members' health-seeking behaviours.</p> <p>This study reveals opportunities from the positive experience of the EVD outbreak in Guinea to improve post-EVD health service utilization and infection prevention at the community level. However, it also shows the need for more efforts to restore community members' confidence in the health system and to address the psychosocial effects of EVD.</p>			