

Policy, Regulatory and Market Related Issues for the Potential Deployment of Triple Artemisinin-Based Combination Therapy (TACT) for the Treatment of Malaria in Ghana

By

JAMES KOMLA ADEHO

ABSTRACT

Background: Malaria is the most prevalent and devastating disease in tropical regions, with an estimated 263 million cases and 597,000 deaths globally in 2023. Control and elimination efforts have included vaccines, insecticide-treated nets (ITN), indoor residual spraying (IRS) and antimalarial drugs.

Despite progress in reducing malaria prevalence and mortality, these advancements risk being eroded by emerging resistance to antimalarial drugs which have received considerable support, leading to avoidable morbidity, mortality and financial losses. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more effective antimalarial drugs. Consequently, calls have been made for the introduction of triple artemisinin-based combination therapies (TACT) (Kokori et al., 2024).

The main objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of stakeholders on the policy, regulatory and market-related issues associated for the potential deployment of Triple Artemisinin Combination Therapy in Ghana.

Methods: This study conducted in the Greater Accra region of Ghana used an exploratory-descriptive qualitative design. Purposive, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select participants from various professional groups and organisations. Respondents were selected for interviews based on their levels of power (influence), interest and degree of engagement. Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides. Interviews took place in quiet locations at the interviewees' convenience and lasted averagely 30 minutes. The interviews

were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data were analysed using the thematic analysis framework outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Results: Participants indicated that, given the level of antimalarial resistance in sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to consider the revision of the current antimalarial drug policy. They emphasised the urgency of addressing this issue to effectively combat growing resistance to existing treatments.

While acknowledging some limitations within the health system, participants expressed confidence that introducing any new antimalarial drug would not present significant challenges. They noted that existing policy and administrative structures are in place to support integrating such changes into the healthcare delivery system.

Respondents from the regulatory agency also expressed readiness to provide the necessary technical and scientific data on the effectiveness, safety and efficacy of Triple Artemisinin-based Combination Therapies prior to their approval for deployment in the country. They affirmed that all processes related to market authorisation would be conducted promptly and appropriately.

The study also revealed that the market appears prepared for a transition from ACTs to TACTs, with manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and other stakeholders positioned to facilitate availability and accessibility for the general population.

Conclusion: The fight against malaria calls for innovative approaches and makes the consideration of triple artemisinin-based combination therapy a promising option for Ghana. However, its successful adoption will depend on scientific evidence and early engagement of key stakeholders including manufacturers, distributors, marketers and prescribers to ensure effective implementation and widespread adoption.