Community Health Worker (CHW) management of severe malaria may benefit from e-learning modules that can reach CHWs where they work and enhance their learning experience

Future Forward – How Digital Media are Transforming SBCC:

Development of a Low Bandwidth e-Learning Module to Reach Community Health Workers to Strengthen Severe Malaria Quality of Care
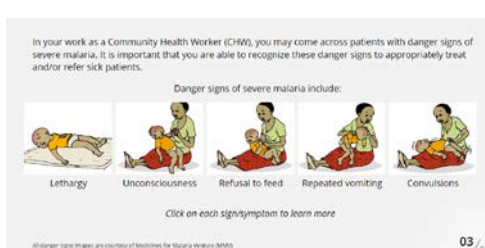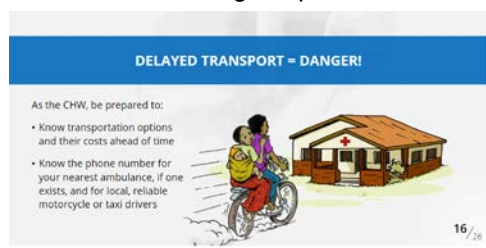
The Problem

- Severe malaria at the community level can lead to excess morbidity and mortality—an estimated 627,000 malaria deaths occurred in 2020—if not treated quickly and appropriately
- CHWs are critical providers of first-line care and must be able to recognize severe malaria danger signs, ensure effective referrals, and, in many settings, administer rectal artesunate (RAS)
- Training CHWs can be challenging as their numbers are many and they are often dispersed across remote areas, compounded by pandemic-related absences or limits on in-person gatherings

e-Module Development

- The production of an e-learning training module designed specifically for CHWs combining plain language, images, and audio to deliver messaging on severe malaria management guidance, best practices, and behaviors
- Requires very low bandwidth to facilitate dissemination:
  - By messenger services such as Whatsapp
  - Downloadable to ensure access in areas with no network
  - Audio-only MP3 option allows Bluetooth transfer between non-smartphones
- Available in multiple languages including English, French, Malagasy, and Kiswahili for use in several countries in the language in which CHWs are most comfortable and confident.

An intended benefit of the e-learning module is to address both gaps in technical knowledge as well as social and behavior change communications (SBCC) best practices, such as rapport and trust building with caretakers, in order to help CHWs ensure completion of the immediate referral of severe malaria patients.

Next Steps (Piloting)

During the pilot and implementation phases of the intervention, PMI Impact Malaria will measure a series of output indicators as proxies to determine utilization, including number of downloads, number of hyperlink visits, and the number of countries using the e-learning module. PMI Impact Malaria will also track requests for further translations into local languages spoken by CHWs.

With additional challenges on in-person training presented by the global pandemic, accessible e-learning and mobile alternatives may become increasingly valuable in bolstering health care worker competencies. Investing in e-learning approaches can support malaria control programs by reaching and delivering training to CHWs located in remote settings, while potentially reducing logistical and operational costs associated with traditional, in-person trainings.

Despite requiring low bandwidth, the e-learning module delivers an interactive learning experience with clickable images that reveal more detailed information, knowledge checks along the way, and a final quiz that must be passed in order to receive a certificate of training completion.

Primary Take-Aways

- Accessibility is paramount
  - e-Learning modules must be in languages in which CHWs feel comfortable and confident to facilitate uptake of content
  - e-Learning modules should utilize a combination of written word, images, and audio text to be accessible to CHWs at all literacy levels
  - e-Learning modules must require only low-bandwidth for dissemination and be downloadable to ensure the modules can by used by CHWs in the places where they work and referred to as job aids in the field

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