

Characteristics of homeless people screened for SARS-CoV-2, Harare, Zimbabwe 2021

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Abstract

Introduction: During the COVID-19 pandemic, homeless people in Zimbabwe were being shifted to rehabilitation centres awaiting transportation to their place of origin. The homeless people were firstly screened for SARS-CoV-2 such that infected individuals were isolated from uninfected ones to prevent in-shelter transmission. This study analysed the characteristics of homeless people who were screened for SARS-CoV-2 in Harare.

Methods: A retrospective cross-sectional study of secondary SARS-CoV-2 data from homeless people tested at Africa Institute of Biomedical Science and Technology (AiBST) laboratory; Harare in January 2021 was done. Epi Info TM 7.2.2.6 was used to generate frequencies, measures of central tendency and proportions of the different characteristics of the SARS-CoV-2 records. Bivariate analysis was used to estimate the association of the demographic characteristics with the outcome of interest (SARS-CoV-2 positive diagnosis).

Results: One hundred and six homeless people were tested for SARS-CoV-2 and 85% (90/106) were males. Twenty-five percent (27/106) of the study participants tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Eighty-one percent (22/27) of the SARS-CoV-2 infected cases were males. Participants in the 0-20yr age group were 2.49 times ($p < 0.05$; OR = 1.01 - 6.14) at risk of being SARS-CoV-2 infected than those above 21years. Eighty-one percent (22/27) of the SARS-CoV-2 cases were asymptomatic.

Conclusion: SARS-CoV-2 infections were found in homeless people from the streets of Harare. There is need to conduct regular SARS-CoV-2 screening among this population regardless of the symptom status since majority of the infected cases were asymptomatic.

Keywords: SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, homeless people, Harare, Zimbabwe