

ABSTRACT

Most leading causes of death and disability in developing countries can be prevented, treated, or at least alleviated with cost effective essential drugs. However, hundreds of millions of people do not have regular access to essential drugs despite the fact that essential drugs can prevent many deaths.

The aim of this study was to determine factors associated with essential drugs shortages in Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities (i.e. clinics and community health centres) in Mopani District in the Limpopo Province. Forty-five facilities were selected by means of stratified (by sub-district) random sampling. Forty-five professional nurses, who were in charge of the facility on the day of the interviews, were interviewed. A structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. Six pharmacists, from the six hospitals that supply drugs to the PHC facilities, were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. A one-on-one informal interview was held with 2 Hospital Superintendents and the Acting Provincial Chief Pharmaceutical Director. The study was both a retrospective and prospective observational study based on review of historical data, interviews with key players and direct observation of current practice. The tools used to collect and analyse the data were based on those developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Health Systems Trust (HST) with some adjustments and adaptation.

The District STI Quality of Care (DISCA) Tool was used in the other thirty-six facilities, at which the structured questionnaire was not administered, to test prescribing indicators in relation to diagnosis, the correctness of and dosage of drugs dispensed and also drugs availability.