

Infant mortality could be lowered through improved medicine packaging designs

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The usage of key medicines in developing countries could be significantly increased through improved packaging appearance, a new study by the Clinton Health Access Initiative, Inc. (CHAI) and the University of Warwick finds.

Infant dehydration due to diarrhoea results in 600,000 deaths annually in the [developing world](#) due to inappropriate or no treatment. Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) combats this dehydration.

The WMG and CHAI researchers worked with over 600 caregivers in India, Nigeria and Uganda to assess their responses to existing and potential new ORS packaging designs. The study found that simple changes to packaging led to significant increases in the willingness of caregivers to provide ORS to their children. Caregivers indicated that current packaging designs had inappropriately large sachets, lacked clear usage detail and were visually unappealing.

While there were some national differences, caregivers in all three countries shared key preferences. As a result, ORS manufacturers are introducing three new packaging designs which will feature smaller sachet size to reduce wastage plus brighter and more informative pictures to more accurately reflect the product's effectiveness. Additionally, flavour will be added to make the ORS more acceptable to infants.

Study co-author Peter M. Ward, a researcher at the University of

Warwick's WMG, argues that improving ORS packaging is one further step towards addressing health issues in the developing world:

"Every additional sachet of ORS sold because of improved aesthetic appeal has the potential to save the life of a child with diarrhoea. Making simple changes to the packaging of an existing product is an easily implementable strategy that could begin immediately".

Kate Kynvin, Supply and Distribution Manager (Essential Medicines) at the Clinton Health Access Initiative, Inc. (CHAI) and study co-author, said:

"The majority of ORS sachets on the market are packaged to make a litre of solution. A primary concern of the rural caregivers interviewed was the inconvenience and wastage created through sourcing a litre of clean water to make a solution that needed to be consumed within a 24-hour time period. Reducing the sachet size to make a smaller volume will reduce this potential for waste, reduce the cost per sachet and increase product appeal."

Commenting on the collaboration Peter said:

"The research marks the first collaboration between WMG and CHAI. We see this as the beginning of a research partnership that will combine our shared goals and expertise to make an impact on health in the developing world".

The research, Consumer-focused Supply Chains: A Cross-Case Comparison of Medicine Appeal and Acceptance in India, Uganda and Nigeria, is to be presented on 29th June at the 22nd International Annual EurOMA Conference, which this year is being held in Neuchâtel, Switzerland (www.euroma2015.org).

Provided by University of Warwick

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