

- Original Article
 - Clinical science

Measuring cataract surgical services in children: an example from Tanzania

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Abstract

Background: Childhood cataract is becoming increasingly recognised as a priority for reducing childhood blindness in developing countries. However, there have been no standard methods to monitor progress in providing this service, besides sporadic reports of surgeries performed.

Methods: Information on all children receiving surgery for congenital/developmental cataract in the two Child Eye Health Tertiary Facilities (CEHTF) in Tanzania was

collected for 2004–6. An annual childhood cataract surgical rate (CCSR) was calculated per region. Male-to-female ratios were also generated by region of residence.

Results: Overall, the CCSR (2006) in Tanzania was 9.9 per million population, ranging from 32.3 for regions where CEHTF are located to 5.4 for regions not adjacent to CEHTF regions. There were, on average, 148 boys for every 100 girls receiving surgery.

Conclusion: Practical application of a measure of service delivery for childhood cataract has been useful in identifying gaps in utilisation of existing services by region as well as by gender. Testing in other settings would be helpful. An apparent inequity in use of services by girls requires attention.