

The Burden and Lived Experience of Acute Gastrointestinal Illness in an Indigenous Batwa Population in Southwestern Uganda

Sierra Clark

Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal (Quebec) Canada

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Supervisors: Dr. Lea Berrang-Ford and Dr. Sherilee Harper

Inequalities in health exist for Indigenous populations around the world, and these gradients often result in a greater burden of infectious disease. Using a mixed methods approach this study aimed to understand the burden and the lived experience of acute gastrointestinal illness (AGI) for an Indigenous Batwa Pymgy population in Uganda. Combining retrospective cross-sectional surveys with key-informant interviews and Batwa group discussions, a more robust understanding of environmentally transmitted infectious illnesses affecting the gastrointestinal tract, was obtained. The Batwa had a 1.66 cases per-person-year annual incidence rate of AGI with children experiencing an even greater annual rate of 3.13. Models estimate that exposure to goats, being a young child, and wealth, are risk factors for AGI. Episodes of AGI were not limited to symptom-based health impacts but also had substantial social, psychological and financial consequences for the affected household. This research provides useful information on the burden of AGI for Batwa but also offers narrative insights into the current challenges faced by marginalized populations globally.

