

Title: Factors affecting antimicrobial stewardship in peri-urban community settings in Wakiso district, Uganda: a qualitative study

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Background: Factors that influence antimicrobial stewardship practices are context-specific, necessitating a deeper understanding of community behaviours. This is particularly important in countries that have weak health systems, and the burden of healthcare is largely carried by individuals and their families.

Objective: To explore factors affecting antimicrobial stewardship in a peri-urban community setting.

Methods: Informed by social constructivism and the socioecological model, 18 in-depth interviews and 8 key informant interviews were conducted among community members and local leaders / health service providers, respectively. Reflective thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and meanings affecting community antimicrobial stewardship.

Results: Behaviours around antimicrobial use were driven by locally constructed knowledge of illness, household-level self-research, relational dynamics with health providers and family, trade-offs between health and daily survival, strategies to minimise financial expenditures or loss, and productivity pressures shaping medicine choices. The findings show that antimicrobial use and practices are embedded within broader interlinked social, economic, and relational factors.

Conclusion: The findings highlight that antimicrobial use in community settings is influenced by complex behavioural and contextual dynamics. Effective stewardship efforts should therefore integrate community realities, lived experiences, and socioeconomic burdens into their design to sustain behaviour change.

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