Living with hypertension in Cameroon on a few dollars per day

Access to Healthcare

Every month, Alvine Nyintché travels 5 kilometers (about 3 miles) to the Etoug-Ebe Baptist Hospital in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. Nyintché, age 50, was diagnosed with high blood pressure seven years ago.

Today, Nyintché has access to an affordable treatment thanks to Novartis Access, which provides a portfolio of medicines that help treat key chronic conditions. In Cameroon, these medicines will be available through some hospitals and clinics of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services. The program will later be extended to other faith-based groups and eventually the entire country. Beyond medicines, activities will be conducted to strengthen healthcare systems. They include training healthcare professionals on how to manage noncommunicable diseases as well as providing community education and awareness.

A memorandum of understanding has recently been signed between the Ministry of Health of Cameroon and Novartis, complementing efforts by the government to establish prevention and control programs for the growing burden of chronic diseases. These diseases – such as diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), cancer and respiratory diseases – are a growing concern in Cameroon, already causing an estimated 31% of deaths every year, according to the World Health Organization.¹

Keep reading (or watch a video) to learn more about how cooperation between the Cameroonian government, faith-based organizations and Novartis Access is helping people like Nyintché.
Like many countries in Africa, Cameroon has experienced a rapid urbanization during the last decade leading to drastic changes in lifestyle. Stress, obesity, physical inactivity, poor eating habits and tobacco consumption are some of the factors that have led to the increase of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases.
“Most Cameroonians do not have medical insurance. Today, I pay 800 CFA francs [about USD 1.5] every month for my hypertension treatment, whereas just a few months back, it cost me 5 000 CFA francs [about USD 9]. I am a single mother. My two daughters are unemployed and we have to pay rent,” says Alvine Nyintché.
Nyintché lives in Briqueterie, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. The majority of Cameroonians live in poverty.
Nyintché shares a single room with her two daughters and grandchild that serves as both her bedroom and living room. She works every day to find solutions to feed herself and her family and to pay for her living expenses and medicine.
Nyintché prepares a dish made of pumpkin seeds that she serves in banana leaves and sells in the street, making an income of barely USD 2 a day. “Sometimes I sell enough to cover all my costs, but other times the quantity is just not enough,” she says.
The Etoug-Ebe Baptist Hospital in Yaoundé is run by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services. This is one of the first facilities where Novartis Access medicines are available to patients to treat conditions such as hypertension.
A patient is being weighed at the Etoug-Ebe Baptist Hospital, one of 88 health facilities run by the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) Health Services. As part of its partnership with Novartis Access, CBC Health Services has launched the Know Your Numbers campaign to encourage individuals to know their critical health numbers such as weight and blood pressure.
Cordel Ndasi, a nurse at the Etoug-Ebe Baptist Hospital, measures a patient's blood pressure. She hopes patients will be more motivated to know their status if they also know they can have access to affordable medicines. “As a nurse, it pains my heart when I see someone coming in with complications. If this person had been diagnosed earlier, we could have given her a treatment to keep her healthy and productive,” she says.
Getting high-quality treatments at an affordable price is an important element of the prevention and control programs put in place by the government of Cameroon to manage noncommunicable diseases.
Getting access to affordable treatment without having to travel long distances offers great hope to people like Nyintché and their families. This will help them take control of their health, sustaining themselves and their families.


Tags:
Access to Healthcare [2]
Africa [3]
Global Health Partnerships [4]
Novartis Access [5]