ACCESS TO MEDICINES ACROSS 14 SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: A PHARMACISTS' PERSPECTIVE FROM THE PHARMA-AF STUDY

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Background and Importance

Access to medicines remains a major challenge in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).
Barriers are commonly conceptualised across **five dimensions:** availability, affordability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality.
Limited data exist on access to medicines from hospital pharmacists' perspectives in SSA.

Objective

To assess barriers to medicine access in Sub-Saharan Africa from hospital pharmacists' perspectives.

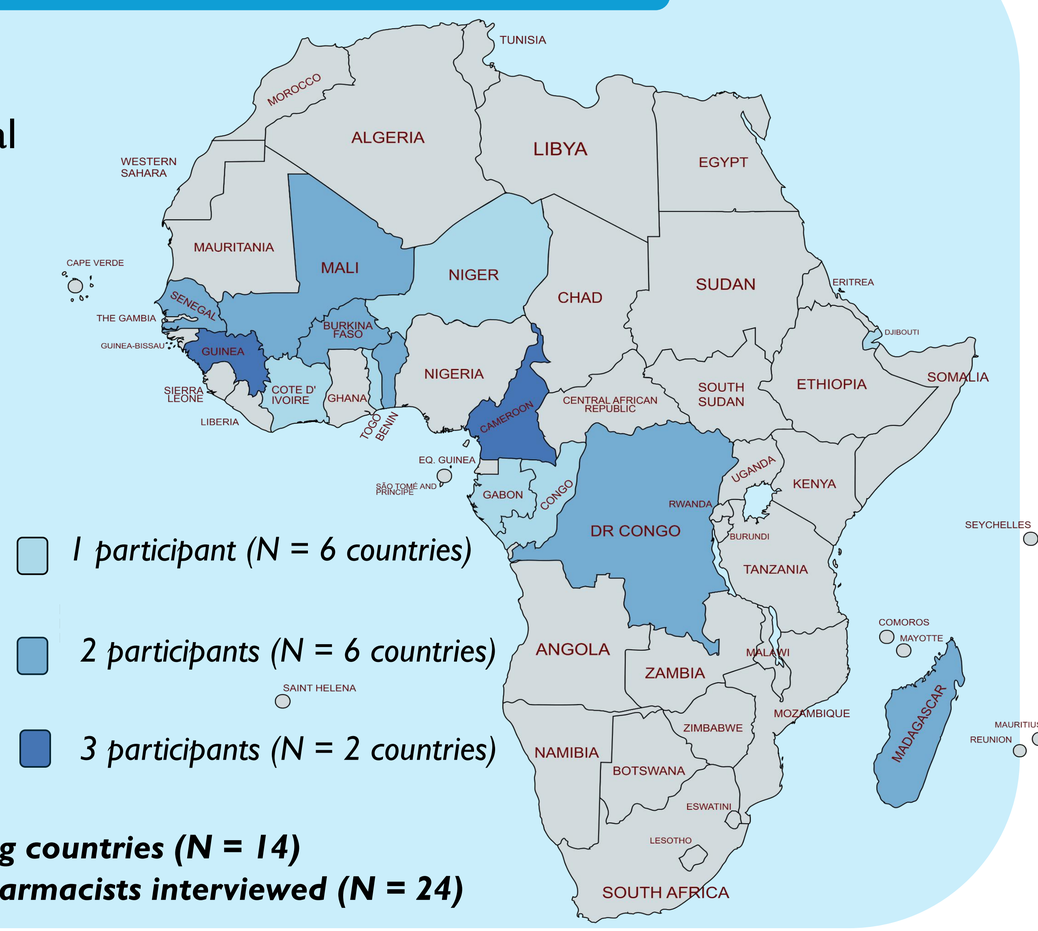
Materials and Methods

Study design:
Semi-structured interviews with hospital pharmacists

Period:
January to May 2025

Analysis:
R software (v4.5.0)

Statistics:
Fisher's exact test (hospital type and country income level)



Participating countries (N = 14)
Hospital pharmacists interviewed (N = 24)

Results

Key findings

Frequent shortages:

58% reported unavailable medicines nationally and

29% reported shortages.

Financial barriers:

67% required full out-of-pocket payment and

33% reported cost-related unavailable medicines nationally.

Accessibility constraints:

Medicines for hospitalised patients were dispensed directly by hospital pharmacies and fully paid out-of-pocket (100%).

Pharmacy staffing averaged **2.0 pharmacists per 100 beds**

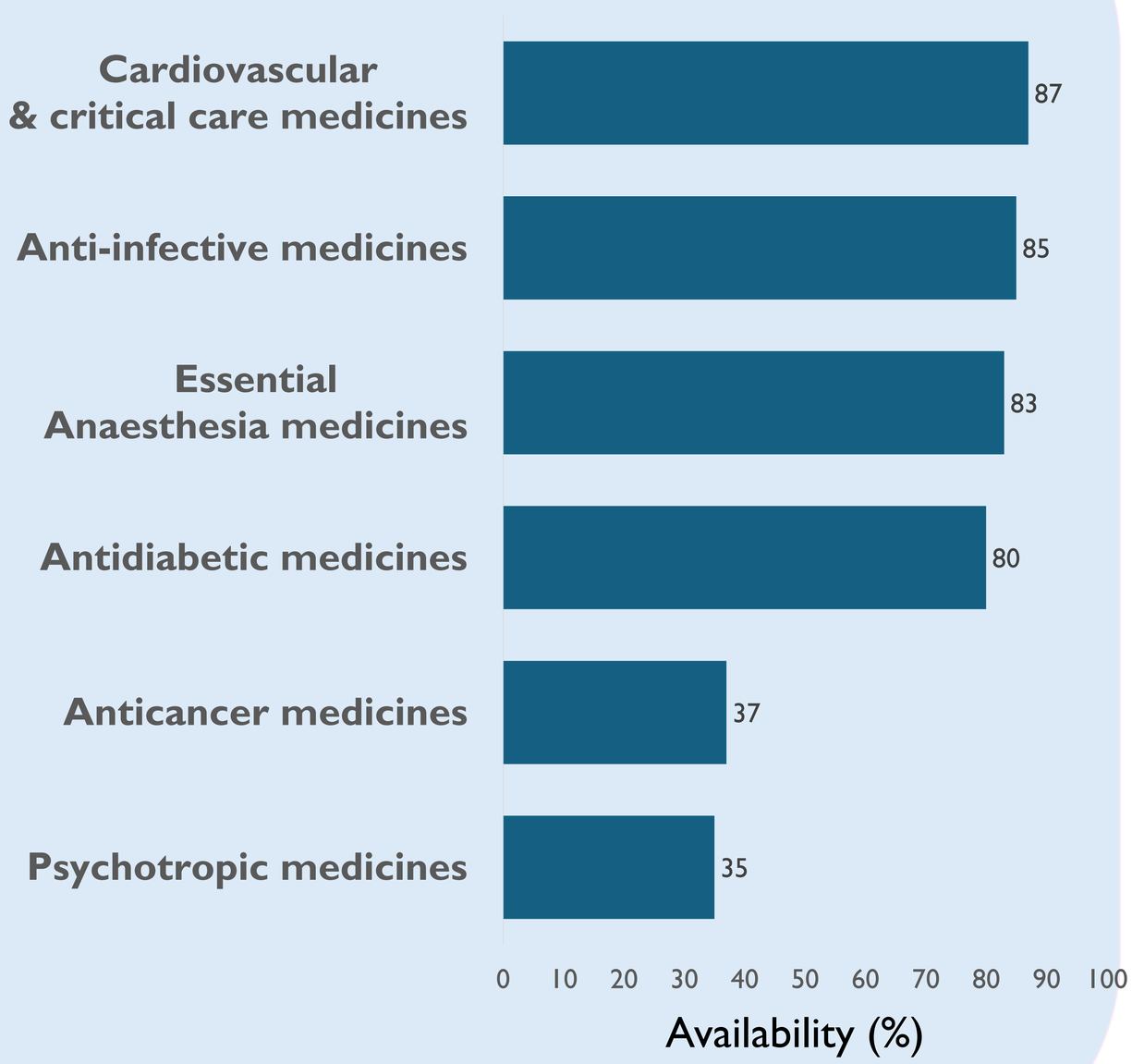
Limited quality control:

88% relied on visual inspection only

advanced analytical testing was rarely available.

No significant differences were observed by country income level or hospital type.

Figure 1. Availability of key therapeutic medicine



Essential anaesthesia medicines include ketamine, propofol and lidocaine; remifentanil excluded due to limited relevance as a specialized agent.

Conclusion

In hospital, access to medicines remains limited across SSA, mainly due to financial barriers and limited availability of essential therapeutic classes.

Keywords

Availability, Essential medicines, Affordability, Sub-Saharan Africa, Accessibility

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