

FACTORS AFFECTING THE REFERRAL OF EYE PATIENTS FROM SECONDARY TO TERTIARY LEVEL IN KARAMOJA SUBREGION

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Background

- An effective referral system is necessary for improvement in the quality of care, outcome, and management of patients which ultimately contributes to the achievement of universal eye health.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests low referrals of eye care patients from the secondary levels to the tertiary facility in Karamoja sub-region.
- The information attained will be used for advocacy and planning to improve management of eye patients in Karamoja sub-region.

OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the pattern of eye disease (numbers and diagnoses) seen at secondary and tertiary levels facilities in Karamoja sub-region in 2019 and 2020.
2. To describe the current referral patterns of eye patients from the secondary to tertiary level in Karamoja sub-region.
3. To assess the impact of COVID 19 on eye consultations at secondary and tertiary levels and on the referral patterns in Karamoja sub-region.
4. To determine the factors facilitating or hindering referral of eye patients from the secondary to tertiary level in Karamoja sub-region.

Methods

1. Review of records at the secondary and tertiary facilities
2. Observation checklist at the secondary facilities
3. Administered questionnaires to eye care workers at the secondary facilities

Health facilities included in the study

District	Name of Health facility	Health care level	Ownership
Moroto	Moroto Regional Referral Hospital	Regional Referral Hospital	Government
Napak	Matany Hospital	District Hospital	PNFP
Abim	Abim Hospital	District Hospital	Government
Amudat	Amudat Hospital	District Hospital	PNFP
Kotido	Kotido Health Centre IV	Health Centre IV	Government
Kaabong	Kaabong Hospital	District hospital	Government
Nakapiripirit	Tokora Health Centre IV	Health Centre IV	Government

Common Diagnoses at the secondary facilities

	Diagnosis	Number N=1460	Percentage
1.	Conjunctivitis	394	27%
2.	Cataract	120	8%
3.	Other eye conditions	948	65%
2020			
	Diagnosis	Number N=3179	Percentage
1.	Conjunctivitis	1051	33%
2.	Cataracts	263	8.3%
3.	Other eye conditions	1863	58.7%

Common Diagnoses at the tertiary facility

	Diagnosis	Number N=2395	Percentage
1.	Cataract	262	11%
2.	Refractive error	88	3.7%
3.	Blindness	45	1.9%
4.	Other eye conditions	2000	83.5%
	Diagnosis	Number N=1444	Percentage
1.	Conjunctivitis	404	28%
2.	Cataracts	183	12.7%
3.	Other eye conditions	857	59.3

Eye consultations in Karamoja subregion in 2019 & 2020

Health facility	Consultations 2019	Consultations 2020
Moroto RRH	10,777 (63.2%)	4,125 (26.3%)
Kaabong Hosp	3,452 (20.2%)	9,342 (59.6%)
Kotido HCIV	886	753
Abim Hosp	884	662
Matany Hosp	649	617
Tokora HCIV	303	97
Amudat Hosp	103	90
Total	17,054	15,686

Expected management of patients at the secondary facilities N=10,778

• Treat

4,811(45%)

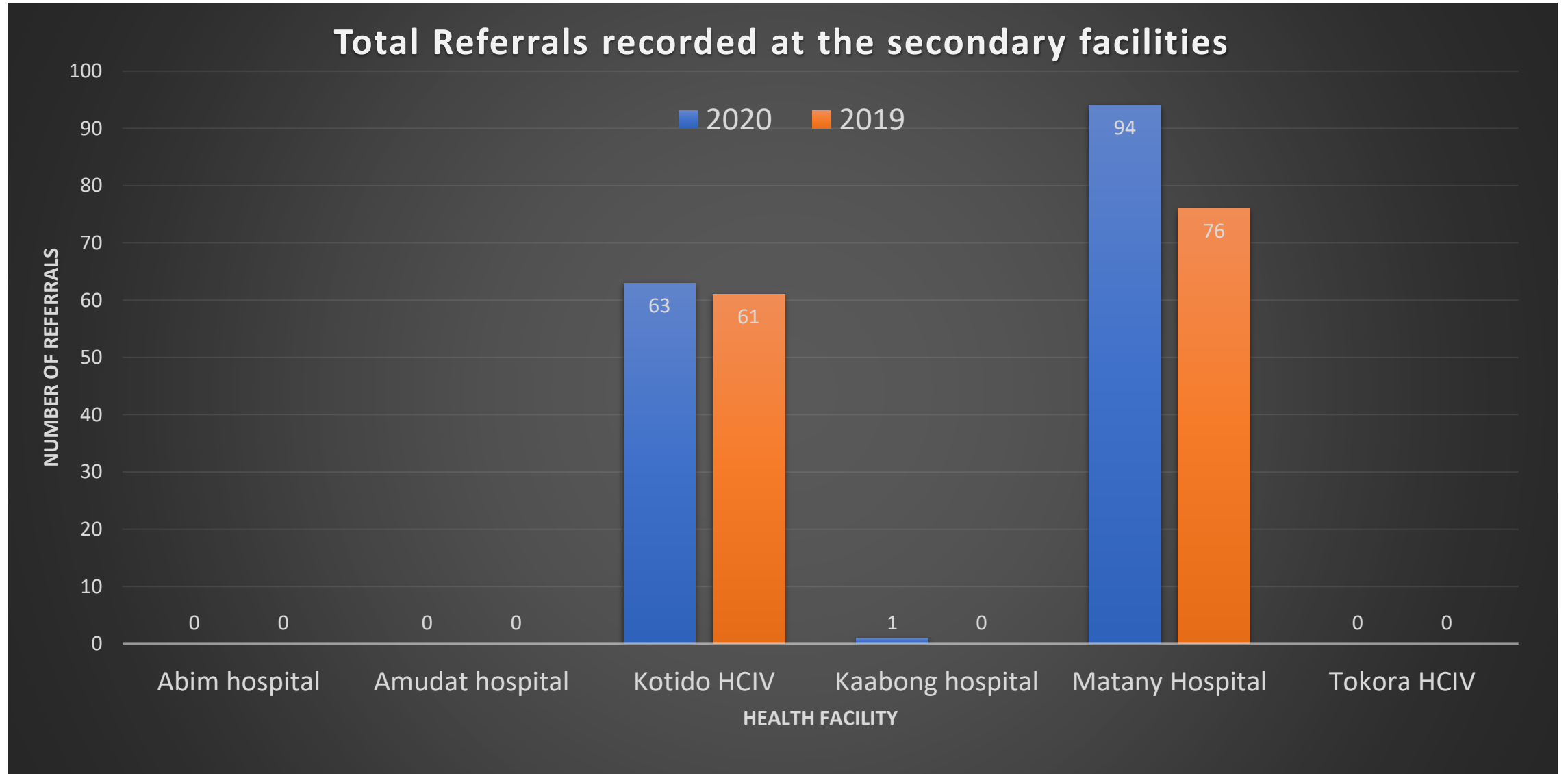
• Refer

3,532(33%)

• Not sure

2,432(23%)

Number of referrals per secondary facility



Impact of Covid 19 on Referrals

Health facility level	2019	2020	Change in 2020 compared to 2019
Secondary facilities	137	158	+15%
Tertiary facility	16	18	Too small

Impact of COVID 19 on eye consultations

Health Facility	2019	2020	Change in 2020 compared to 2019	
Moroto RRH	10,777	4,125	-6,652	-62%
Kaabong Hosp	3,452	9,342	+5,890	+171%
Kotido HCIV	886	753	-133	-15%
Abim Hosp	884	662	-222	-25%
Matany Hosp	649	617	-32	-5%
Tokora HCIV	303	97	-206	-68%
Amudat Hosp	103	90	-13	-13%
Total	17,054	15,686	-1,368	-8%

Infrastructure and Human resource

Health facility	Dedicated OPD room	Cadre	Availability	
Kaabong Hosp	Yes	OCO (Ophthalmic clinical officer)	Full time	
Kotido HCIV	Yes	OCO	Full time	
Matany Hospital	Yes	OA (Ophthalmic Assistant)	Full time	
Tokora HCIV	No	OA	Part time	
Amudat Hosp	Yes (but not in use)	OCO	Part time	
Abim hosp	No	General clinician	Part time	

Diagnostic Equipment

Diagnostic equipment	Facilities reporting availability N=6
Direct ophthalmoscope	5
Tonometer	1
Torch	5
Refraction set	5
Diagnostic Loupe	5
VA chart	5

Diagnostic consumables

Diagnostic consumables	Number of facilities reporting availability N=6
Local anesthetic eye drop	0
Mydriatic eye drops	0
Fluorescein strips	0

Challenges faced in managing eye patients

- Lack of diagnostic equipment
- Lack of diagnostic consumables
- Lack of support supervision

Challenges faced with referral of eye patients

- No one to accompany the patient
- Lack of transport
- No feedback from the tertiary facility

Limitations

- **Use of records:** incorrect/missed information
- **Diagnostic indicators** were different for 2019 and 2020
- **Selection:** excluded two secondary eye care facilities
- **Generalization:** findings cannot be generalized to entire country

Key points

- A decrease in the number of consultations at both the secondary and tertiary levels in 2020
- Wide range in the number of consultations at the secondary facilities
- Poor record keeping
- Low referrals recorded at the secondary facilities
- Low referrals reaching the tertiary facility
- Inadequate Human resource, poor infrastructure, lack of diagnostic equipment and consumables were key factors hindering referral

Recommendations

1. There is need for the national medical stores to consider putting these consumables in the essential drug lists for supply to these health facilities.
2. There is need to appoint an eye care worker in Abim Hospital.
3. There is need to appoint eye care workers who are working part time as full-time eye care workers.
4. There is need to allocate/construct eye units in Tokora HCIV and Abim Hospital.
5. There's need for sensitization of eye care workers on referral guidelines, record keeping.
6. Avail hard copies of the clinical guidelines for eye care to all OCOS
7. Quarterly visits to the secondary facilities by the ophthalmologist to see non-emergency cases.

What has been achieved so far

- Slit lamps have been purchased by Sightsavers for the secondary facilities-OCOs awaiting training
- Three OCOS are being trained by Sightsavers for Karamoja subregion
- Issues of HReH was raised at the Annual health performance review of Karamoja
- A soft copy of the clinical guideline for eye care has been shared
- We have opened a whatsApp group for Karamoja eye care workers where cases are discussed before referral
- Referrals are gradually improving

THANK YOU