

**Faculty of medical laboratory science
public health MLS-PUBH-322
sem.6**

Integrated Management of
Childhood Illness (IMCI)

IMCI: Background

- Every day, millions of parents seek health care for their sick children, taking them to hospitals, health centres, pharmacists, doctors and traditional healers.
- Surveys reveal that many sick children are not properly assessed and treated by these health care providers, and that their parents are poorly advised.
- At first-level health facilities in low-income countries, diagnostic supports such as radiology and laboratory services are minimal or non-existent.

IMCI: Background

- Limited supplies and equipment, combined with an irregular flow of patients, leave health workers at this level with few opportunities to practice complicated clinical procedures.
- Instead, they often rely on history and signs and symptoms to determine a course of management that makes the best use of the available resources.
- These factors make providing quality care to sick children a serious challenge.
- WHO and UNICEF have addressed this challenge by developing a strategy called the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).

IMCI: Definition

- IMCI is an integrated approach to child health that focuses on the well-being of the whole child.
- IMCI aims to reduce death, illness and disability, and to promote improved growth and development among children under five years of age.
- IMCI includes both preventive and curative elements that are implemented by families and communities as well as by health facilities.

IMCI: Objectives

- ✓ The **strategy** includes **three main** components:
 - Improving case management skills of health-care staff
 - Improving overall health systems
 - Improving family and community health practices.

IMCI: Objectives

- ✓ In **health facilities**, the IMCI strategy:
 - Promotes the accurate identification of childhood illnesses in outpatient settings.
 - Ensures appropriate combined treatment of all major illnesses.
 - Strengthens the counselling of caretakers.
 - Speeds up the referral of severely ill children.

IMCI: Objectives

- ✓ In the **home setting**, the IMCI strategy
 - Promotes appropriate care seeking behaviours.
 - Improves nutrition and preventative care.
 - Improves the correct implementation of prescribed care.

IMCI: vs. Single-condition Approaches

- Children brought for medical treatment in the developing world are often suffering from more than one condition, making a single diagnosis impossible.
- IMCI is an integrated strategy, which takes into account the variety of factors that put children at serious risk.
- It ensures the combined treatment of the major childhood illnesses, emphasizing prevention of disease through immunization and improved nutrition.

IMCI: Implementation

- ✓ Introducing and implementing the IMCI strategy in a country is a phased process that requires a great deal of coordination among existing health programmes and services. The main steps are:
 - Adopting an integrated approach to child health and development in the national health policy.
 - Adapting the standard IMCI clinical guidelines to the country's needs, available drugs, policies, and to the local foods and language used by the population.

IMCI: Implementation

- Upgrading care in local clinics by training health workers in new methods to examine and treat children, and to effectively counsel parents.
- Making upgraded care possible by ensuring that enough of the right low-cost medicines and simple equipment are available.

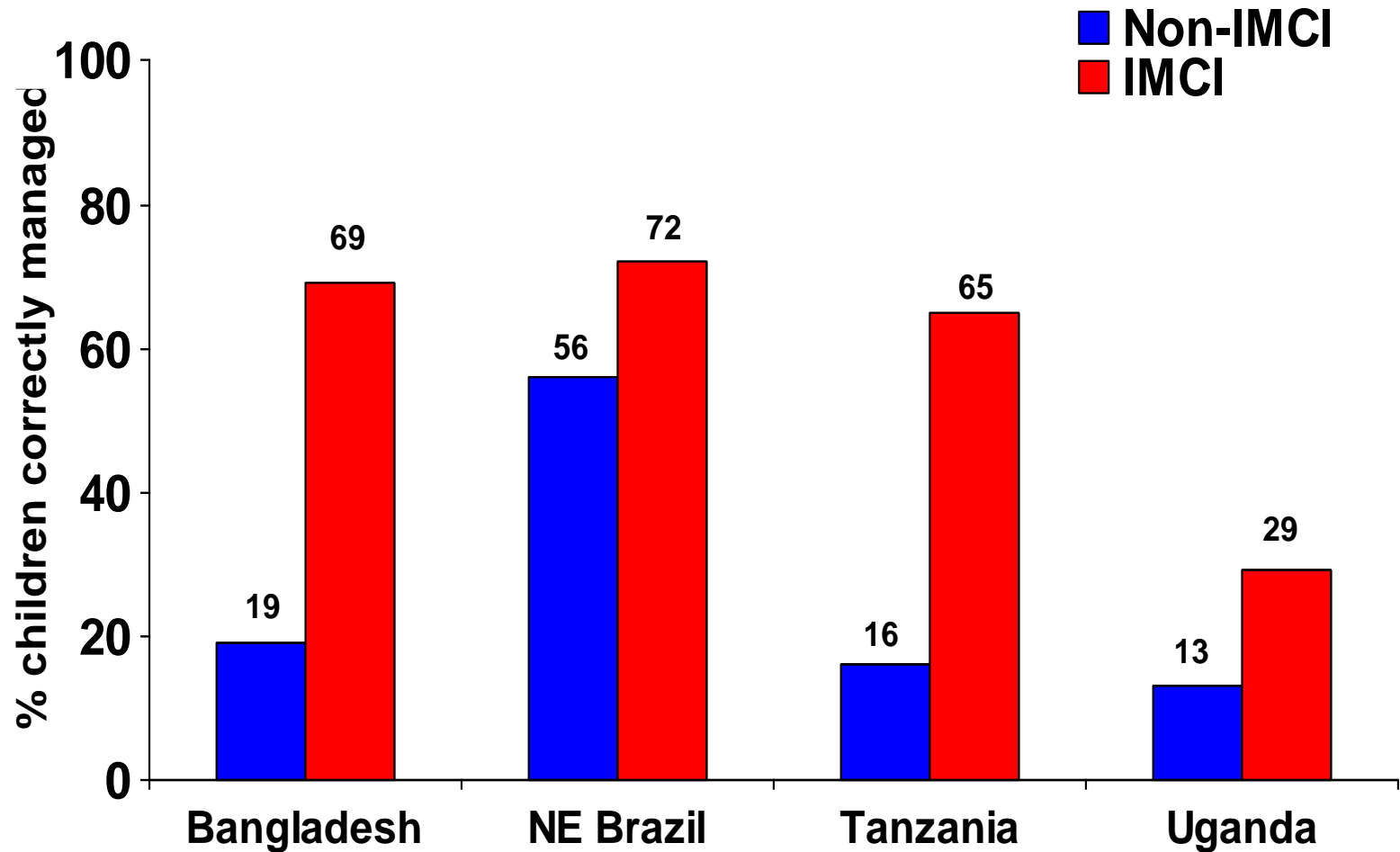
IMCI: Implementation

- Strengthening care in hospitals for those children too sick to be treated in an outpatient clinic.
- Developing support mechanisms within communities for preventing disease, for helping families to care for sick children, and for getting children to clinics or hospitals when needed.

IMCI: Evaluation

- MCA has undertaken a Multi-Country Evaluation (MCE) to evaluate the impact, cost and effectiveness of the IMCI strategy.
- The results of the MCE support planning and advocacy for child health interventions by ministries of health in developing countries, and by national and international partners in development.
- The MCE was conducted in Brazil, Bangladesh, Peru, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

IMCI: Evaluation



IMCI: Evaluation

- ✓ The results of the MCE indicate that:
 - IMCI improves health worker performance and their quality of care;
 - IMCI can reduce under-five mortality and improve nutritional status, if implemented well;
 - IMCI is worth the investment, as it costs up to six times less per child correctly managed than current care;

IMCI: Evaluation

- child survival programmes require more attention to activities that improve family and community behaviour;
- the implementation of child survival interventions needs to be complemented by activities that strengthen system support;
- a significant reduction in under-five mortality will not be attained unless large-scale intervention coverage is achieved.

