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“Ne nnipadua mmpe” (the body hates it): Exploring the lived experience of food allergy in Sub-Saharan Africa

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“ne nnipadua mmpe” (the body hates it): exploring the lived experiences of food allergy in Ghana**Abstract**

Allergic diseases have closely followed the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) especially in western societies. As prevalence of NCD is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), researchers are hinting that the same future may hold for (food) allergic disease in this world region. Already, researchers are beginning to record prevalence, though with little attention to the social experience of individuals and parents with food allergic children. This paper presents the first qualitative analysis of the daily realities of adults and parents of children with allergies in SSA, using Ghana as a case study. Drawing on political ecology of health, this study contextualizes the psychological (e.g. anxiety and fear), social (e.g. stigmatization, social exclusion), and economic (e.g. impact on work & household expenditures) wellbeing of affected persons within the broader sociocultural environment. By exploring the sociocultural environment, the results provide insights into the likely structures (e.g. the lack of familiarity, absence of local discursive repertoire on food allergy, infrastructure deficit) which interact to shape anxiety, and social exclusion of people with allergy. The case study provide evidence suggesting food allergies do have a global reach, and policy makers must heed the message to integrate food allergy into the broader chronic disease prevention agenda.

Key words: Ghana, Chronic disease, Food allergy, Political ecology of health, Sub-Saharan Africa

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