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ANALYSIS OF READY-TO-USE-THERAPEUTIC-FOOD (RUTF) FOR THE TREATMENT OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN AGES 6-59 MONTHS IN BRONG-AHAFO REGION, GHANA

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Acute malnutrition affects over 52 million, or one in twelve, children worldwide. Though a preventable and treatable condition, malnutrition is responsible for 45 percent of deaths among children under the age of five. Until recently, care for children with acute malnutrition was restricted to hospitals and therapeutic feeding centers. The discovery of ready-to-use-therapeutic-foods (RUTF) has drastically transformed malnutrition treatment from a facility-based approach to a community-based approach.

The current study analyzed two different types of RUTF acute malnutrition in 6–59-month-old children in a 12-week home-based feeding program the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. A double-blinded and randomized clinical equivalency trial was conducted in order to compare an alternative, locally-produced RUTF to standard RUTF. The effectiveness of both RUTF was analyzed using anthropometric measurements such as weight-to-height Z score (WHZ) and mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measurements. With the introduction of locally-produced RUTF, the study aimed to find means of reducing production costs and integrating malnutrition treatment in a sustainable and local manner.

With the introduction of RUTF, management of acute malnutrition must also take the social and cultural factors into consideration. The causes of malnutrition reach need to be understood on a macro, meso and micro level. Interviews with mothers and community health workers were used to analyze beliefs surrounding malnutrition and interactions with traditional healing practices. With an ethnographic perspective to supplement the quantitative data, the study presented how the therapeutic foods could be more synergistically integrated with existing cultural and social practices of Ghana.