Prioritizing access over quality: Perceptions of households on the effects of latrines on water quality in Wa in the Upper West Region of Ghana

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Siting of both a latrine and a dugout well in a household is a common practice in developing countries despite the negative health consequences of such practice. The World Health Organization recommends a distance of at least 50 meters between a water source and a sanitation facility. Studies suggest that there are adverse health effects associated with locating latrines and dugout wells in the same house. Yet, there is limited knowledge about perceptions of households on the health effects of co-locating toilets and dugout wells in their houses. This study explores the motivations of household members for co-location of toilets and dugout wells and their perceptions of the associated health effects in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Using in-depth interviews and observational techniques among thirty households, the study found that households were co-locating toilets and water sources to ensure easy access. Meanwhile respondents reported little knowledge of negative health outcomes associated with the co-location. The findings highlight a public health risks and suggest that an improvement in monitoring, supervision and a planned siting of sanitation facilities is necessary.

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