At the same time 5ml of blood was collected from the median cubital vein of each participant using standard venipuncture technique in serum separator tube (SST). The specimens were labelled with an identifier, date and time of collection. This was transported to the central laboratory for the assigned senior laboratory scientist to conduct the test.

**Results**

During the study period, 807 women attended antenatal care, out of which 506 were tested for syphilis using POC and VDRL test kits concurrently.

The mean age of the participants was 31.30±5.3. About 45.5% were of low parity while 11.1% were of high parity. Civilians were 42.1% while military personnel consisted more than half of the study population Table 1.

The prevalence of syphilis was 1.8% and 4.3% using VDRL and POC test kits respectively. Comparing the two tests, it was found that POC detected more women with positive result in the screening in relation to VDRL (p<0.001) Table 2, Figure 1. It was also noted that more of the military personnel were reactive to the screening using either of those kits (P<0.001) Table 3.

**Discussion**

Vertical transmission of syphilis is one of the leading causes of neonatal deaths especially in low-income countries where there is presumably high prevalence of syphilis and low testing rates. It is even more worrisome that the confirmatory laboratory investigations require a lot of expertise, facilities and electricity most of which may not be available in low resource settings which invariably hampers efficient diagnosis and treatment.

Our study was undertaken to compare the detection of syphilis using point of care testing versus venereal disease research laboratory testing among pregnant women. The result showed that there was a significant difference between the two screening tests, with POC detecting more positive cases than VDRL tests. Thilakavathi in India found that POC is more effective in detecting syphilis when compared to VDRL. However, he used TPHA as a standard to compare both tests.

The prevalence of syphilis was 1.8% using VDRL. This is comparable to the finding of 1.98 by Opone et al in southern Nigeria. It is also comparable to 1.7%, 1.5%, and 0.4% reported in other parts of Nigeria. However, it is lower than 5.0% and 10.0% reported by other authors in south-south and south-west Nigeria respectively.

More than half (57.9%) of the pregnant women that tested positive to the screening tests were military personnel. This is similar to the result of Gottwald and co-workers who reported that soldiers infected with sexually transmitted infections were very much higher than in civilian population.

Similarly, Okeke and colleagues in Enugu in their study also revealed a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among pregnant women.