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Research Article

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE STUDY
TOWARDS LEPROSY, A RURAL SURVEY IN FAISALABAD,
PAKISTAN****Dr. Sadia Naz, Dr. Bassam Mohsin Tahir, Dr. Saba Razzaq****Abstract:**

Objective: To determine the level of knowledge, attitude and practices towards leprosy in rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Material and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan. Data was collected from total 120 subjects through self-structured questionnaire. Participants of 18-80 years take part in our study. Informed consent was signed by the participants to take part in study. Data was collected through SPSS

Results: Study findings exhibited lack of knowledge about the presenting features, transmission and treatment of disease. The attitude towards the patient was found negative, as peoples are reluctant to sit, shake hands, sharing food and clothes with patients, but in same way they also showing sympathy with patient.

Conclusion: Present study revealed negative attitude of study population towards leprosy patients, which shows lack of knowledge and uncertainty about disease. Education and proper awareness about disease and its treatment is need of time via conducting public seminars on rural level.

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INTRODUCTION:

Leprosy (Hansen's disease) is a human infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. It was identified by G. H. A. Hansen in the 19th century. Despite the high efficacy of multidrug therapy (MDT), transmission is tenacious[1].

World Health Organization received official reports from 115 countries and territories, the global registered prevalence of leprosy at the beginning of 2006 stood at 219,826 cases, while the number of new cases detected during 2005 was 296,499. However, the pockets of high endemicity still remain in some areas of the world[2]. It is patho-physiological process of tissues being invaded by a causative agent. This disease affects the psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing of the patients and his/ her family, friends and the community[3].

World Health Organization in 1991 set the goal of elimination of leprosy by the year 2000 through its resolution WHA44.9[4]. Pakistan has achieved the goal of leprosy cases less than one per 10,000 population in 1996. The decrease in prevalence rate of leprosy may be illusive because it is masking the existence of numerous smaller foci of high prevalence in some of the communities, resulting in occurrence of disease for several years after achieving the goal. It requires continuous health education activities to avoid delay at any stage of the disease[5].

Aim of present study was to know the knowledge, attitude and practices towards leprosy, in rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

A cross sectional study was conducted in the rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan during the month of October 2019. Simple random sampling method was adopted. Data was collected through self-structured questionnaire from 120 subjects. The questionnaire

was designed on the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding leprosy and comprised both open and closed ended questions. Participants of 18-80 years take part in our study. Informed consent was signed by the participants to take part in study. Data was collected through SPSS.

RESULTS:

Data was collected from total 120 participants including 50 males and 70 females of 18 years and above. The minimum age was 18 years and maximum was 80 years. Majority of the participants were in 18 – 38 years age group. 25% of our participants were illiterate and never attended school, while 75% were literate and attended school at least up to primary level. 36 respondents knew about skin patch as a presenting sign of leprosy, while majority don't know that lumps(65), swelling(50), skin deformation(87), sensation loss(54) occurs in leprosy as given in table 1.

According to majority of respondents 35(29.1%) leprosy is transmitted through skin contact and sitting with leprosy patient 22(18%). 11(9.2%) don't know about its transmission, while other thinks that transmission is through air 3(2.5%), insect 7(5.8%), sexual contact 6(5%), food sharing 16(13.3%), mother to child 5(4.1%), clothes sharing 15(12.5%) as given in table 2.

33(27.5%) don't know about leprosy treatment. Majority 41(34.1%) believes that their religious rituals can treat leprosy. 13(10.8%) of our respondents believes that patient separation is only required for treatment, while only 22(18.3%) and 11(9.1%) believes that herbs and medicine were effective in treatment respectively.

Overall the knowledge about leprosy features, transmission and treatment is very poor among study respondents.

Table 1.

knowledge about Leprosy features			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Skin Patches	36	17	67
Lumps	18	37	65
Swelling	23	47	50
Skin deformation	11	22	87
Sensation loss	19	47	54

Table 2.

Transmission knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Air	3	2.5%
Insects	7	5.8%
Sexual contact	6	5%
Skin contact	35	29.1%
Sitting with leprosy pt.	22	18%
Food sharing	16	13.3%
Mother to child	5	4.1%
Clothes sharing	15	12.5%
Don't know	11	9.2%

Table 3.

Knowledge about treatment	Frequency	Percentage
Medicines	11	9.1%
Herbs	22	18.3%
Religious believes	41	34.1%
Patient separation	13	10.8%
Don't know	33	27.5%

Attitude and practices

The most common response of study population towards leprosy patient was to show sympathy (88). 69 mentioned that they will avoid leprosy patients.

People were reluctant to sit (63), sharing food (81), living with leprosy patient (72), hand shaking (88) and not allow them to attend public functions (95). A few of them expressed a neutral attitude as given in table 4.

Table 4.

Attitude and practice	Yes	No	Neutral
Sitting with leprosy patient	21	63	36
Sharing food with leprosy patient	9	81	30
Living with leprosy patient	10	72	38
Avoiding leprosy patient	69	15	36
Hand shaking with leprosy patient	12	88	20
Allow to attend public functions	4	95	21
Showing sympathy with patient	88	10	22

DISCUSSION:

The current study was conducted in the rural areas of Faisalabad, Pakistan. Data was collected from total 120 participants including 50 males and 70 females ranged from 18 to 80 years.

The knowledge about the presenting features of leprosy like skin patches, lumps, swelling, skin deformation and loss of sensation is very poor in study population. 29.1% and 18% of study population believes that it is transmitted through skin contact and sitting with leprosy patient respectively.

Attitudes and practices of community towards leprosy were mostly negative however majority shows sympathy with leprosy patients. Peoples avoid patient and are reluctant to sit, shake hand, share food and clothes. They also don't allow patient to attend public functions.

CONCLUSION:

Present study revealed negative attitude of study population towards leprosy patients, which shows lack of knowledge and uncertainty about leprosy and a poor knowledge about presenting features, transmission

and treatment of leprosy. Education and proper awareness about disease and its treatment is need of time via conducting public seminars on rural level.

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