

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards Strabismus among Medical Practitioners

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Abstract

Purpose: To determine the knowledge, attitude and practice towards strabismus among medical practitioners. *Methods:* A structured questionnaire was constructed with questions regarding awareness, knowledge of etiology, consequences, prevention and the treatment of strabismus. Questionnaire were randomly distributed among all doctors and answers obtained were tabulated. Total of 170 questionnaire sheets were distributed among them 150 completely answered sheets were collected. Results were calculated using proportions and percentages. *Results:* Only 54% of subjects included in the study knew about the aetiology and 70% of them knew that strabismus can be prevented. 95% prefer to refer strabismus patients to an ophthalmologists and 76% agree that every school going child to be screened for strabismus. 58% think that surgery is the only treatment and 59% knew strabismus can also be corrected optically. *Conclusion:* Although medical practitioners showed fair knowledge about the condition, still there is a need to create awareness regarding the etiological factors and varied treatment approaches is required.

Keywords: Strabismus; Questionnaire; Medical Practitioners.

Introduction

Strabismus means ocular misalignments whether caused by abnormalities in binocular vision or by anomalies of neuromuscular control of ocular motility. The term strabismus derived from Greek word strabismus "to squint or look obliquely". It is a common condition with a prevalence of 5% in children aged 5-6 years [1]. A study conducted in Butajira town in 2001 among pre-school children showed a prevalence of strabismus to be 1.5% and strabismic amblyopia was found in 51.7% of the children [2].

As strabismus is one of the major cause of amblyopia there is a need for its early detection and treatment. This is possible if all medical practitioners are aware of detection and treatment options of strabismus. So we have made an attempt to study the knowledge, attitude and practice about strabismus among medical practitioners in a tertiary health care centre.

Materials and Methods

A cross sectional study was conducted in a tertiary care Centre. The sample includes mainly doctors including post graduates working in various departments. The well structured questionnaire was given to randomly sampled number of doctors. The questionnaire included 20 questions based on etiology, consequences and treatment aspects of strabismus. The respondents were supposed to fill the questionnaires as and when they were given. Questionnaire sheets in which all 20 questions were answered were included in the analysis. Obtained responses were tabulated in a master chart. Results were calculated using proportions and valid percentages.

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Results

A total of 150 completed questionnaires sheets were collected and included for analysis. 54% of them know about varied etiological factors and the response is shown in Figure1. While 70% of them know that strabismus can be prevented. Only 40% of doctors think that strabismus can lead to blindness. But 80% have agreed that strabismus should be treated early.

For the questions regarding social impact, 82% of them think that squint can lead to low self esteem of a person. 81% had responded that marriages are denied because of squint .

59% of them know that squint can be corrected by refraction and 58% thinks that surgery is the only treatment to strabismus. 95% prefer to refer a case of strabismus to an ophthalmologists.

Discussion

Even though there is no similar study for comparison, this cross-sectional study has provided baseline information on the knowledge, practice and attitude of medical practitioners towards strabismus.

Kefale Geta and Abebe Bejiga [3] conducted a study among rural population and they concluded that rural community had very less knowledge about the causes and treatment of strabismus with lot of misconception.

Majority of strabismus cases can be treated early provided they are identified and treated at early age, particularly before the age of 2 years.^[3] In our study also 87% of subjects agreed that strabismus should be treated early.

The consequences of untreated strabismus are amblyopia, loss of binocular vision and cosmetic stigma [3-5]. In our study only 68% were aware of all possible consequences.

Studies done on elementary school children in Keelung Ann-Lo community and strabismus children in Tunisia [6,7], show very high prevalence of strabismic amblyopia in the tune of 42.9% and 58 % respectively. Only 42% of our study subjects know about strabismic amblyopia.

It has been concluded that Amblyopia and strabismus patients have difficulty in seeing 3D movies [8]. 23.3% of the subjects have answered correctly in our study.

In a study conducted on Premature babies had

showed that Retinopathy of Prematurity places the premature infants at the increased risk of strabismus [9]. In our study only 38% of the subjects know that premature babies are prone for strabismus. 76% of subjects have agreed that every school going child should be evaluated for squint.

There is now growing evidence on the psychosocial impacts of strabismus, with three studies reporting that strabismus may create significant negative social prejudice [10-12] and significantly reduce a person's chances to obtain employment [13]. In addition, affected adolescents and adults report that strabismus negatively affect their self-image and interpersonal relationship with others [14]. In our study also 82% of them agree that strabismus can cause low self esteem and 81% had told marriages are denied because of strabismus. 64% agreed that strabismus reduces chances to obtain several jobs.

Conclusion

As doctors are the reliable source of information to the community, a sound knowledge about strabismus among medical practitioners will help in managing strabismus patients effectively. Though our study subjects have shown fair knowledge about strabismus, still need education in the area of causes, consequences and treatment options available. Hence this calls for conducting education programmes for thorough knowledge of strabismus.

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