

Assessment of Prevalence, Risk Factors and Treatment Regime Followed in Acute Diarrhoeal Diseases in a Semiurban and Rural Area of Dakshina Kannada

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Background

Diarrhoea is defined as the passage of loose, liquid or watery stools, more than three times a day. It is a major public health problem and is one of the leading causes of illness and death, in children, living in insanitary conditions. World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 3.5 million deaths occur each year because of diarrhoea and its related complications of dehydration and malnutrition.

Aims And Objectives

The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence, risk factors and treatment regime followed in acute diarrhoeal diseases in a semiurban and rural area of Dakshina Kannada. Awareness about the signs and symptoms of dehydration and the popular home remedies taken to combat diarrhoea and dehydration was also evaluated in the study population.

Material And Methods

A cross sectional study was carried out in Jeppinamogaru(Semi-urban) and Ullal(Rural), field practice areas of Department of Community Medicine, Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, South India, in the month of February 2013. It was carried out among 575 individuals by using a pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire. Each participant was asked for history of diarrhoea over the past one year.

Results

Out of the 575 individuals interviewed, 69(12%) had suffered from diarrhoea in the past year. Maximum number of cases,i.e, 22(31.8%) were found in the age group of 0-5 years. It was seen that 39(56.6%) of the cases occurred in the lower middle class population ($p=0.357$) with 30.7% of the cases occurring in individuals with unsatisfactory living conditions ($p=0.02$). 42(62.3%) of the cases occurred during the winter season. It was shocking to see that 49% of the population took no treatment for this problem. 89% of the population had moderate awareness about the signs and symptoms of dehydration and the home remedies available for its treatment. However, 20.5% of males had poor awareness as compared to 5.5% females ($p=0.01$).

Conclusions

Children below the age of five years are more susceptible to diarrhoeal diseases. Also, most of the cases were attributed to poor socioeconomic status and unsatisfactory living conditions. Also because of poor awareness amongst individuals, adequate treatment may not be sought out for at an earlier stage of the disease. It is important to increase awareness of the people on the necessity of adequate personal and public hygiene practices so as to prevent the occurrence of diarrhoea. It is also necessary to highlight the importance of acquiring treatment so as to prevent further complications of dehydration and malnutrition.