



Knowledge, attitude and perception regarding dengue fever among university students of interior Sindh

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KEYWORDS

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Summary

Background: Dengue is among the most common mosquito-borne viral diseases that affect humans. It has now become a major public health dilemma, annually affecting approximately 50–100 million people worldwide. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and perception of dengue fever among university students of interior Sindh.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted during the period of April–June 2012. Four hundred and fifty students were surveyed. A structured pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 17.

Results: Overall, 94.6% of participants (43.3% male and 56.7% female, p -value 0.03) reported that they had heard about dengue, and 58.6% of participants reported “*Aedes mosquito*” as a vector of dengue virus, with gender difference (37.5% male vs 62.5% females with p -value <0.001). The *Aedes mosquito* is “*A small dark mosquito having white stripes on its leg*” was reported by 54.8% students. The *Aedes mosquito* breeds in “*Stagnant clean water*” was reported by 47.6% (male 40.2% vs female 59.8%, p -value 0.003) and usually bites at “*Dusk*” by 44.7% and at “*Dawn*” by 51%. Regarding symptoms of dengue fever, “*Prolonged high fever*” was reported by 52.6%, “*Muscular pain*” by 39.6% (p -value 0.009), “*Bleeding*” by 41.3% (p -value 0.001) and “*Headache, nausea and vomiting*” by 44.7% (p -value 0.001).

Conclusion: Approximately half of the participants in our study were unable to correctly identify the *Aedes mosquito* as a transmission source (41.4%), its appearance

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(45.2%), its breeding place (52.4%) and its bite time (52.2%). The enhancement of knowledge through different educational programs is needed to increase awareness of dengue fever.

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Introduction

Dengue is among the most common mosquito-borne viral diseases that affect humans. It has now become a major public health dilemma, annually affecting approximately 50–100 million people worldwide. Dengue fever has made a remarkable upsurge all over the world in recent decades, exposing more than 2.5 billion people to the risk of acquiring this infection [1]. Dengue virus is an RNA virus that belongs to the family Flaviviridae and has four different but closely related serotypes: DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4 [2]. Infection with one serotype provides lifelong immunity for that particular serotype but only partial immunity for the other serotypes [1,2]. Infection with dengue produces a broad array of illnesses, from flu-like fever and typical dengue fever to more dangerous forms such as dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome [2].

Dengue fever is found all over the world in tropical and sub-tropical regions. Its increased transmission in addition to a preference for urban and semi-urban areas has gained much more attention in recent decades [1]. However, three quarters of all cases of dengue fever worldwide occur in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific regions [3]. In the Americas (2007), more than 890,000 cases of dengue were identified, of which 26,000 cases were dengue hemorrhagic fever [4]. Classical dengue fever and dengue hemorrhagic fever are now endemic in the sub-continent of Asia. Currently, dengue is endemic in 112 countries, making dengue fever one of the world's most common emerging infectious diseases [5]. Multiple epidemics have also been reported in different regions of India, Sri Lanka and other Asian countries [6]. In Pakistan, the most significant epidemic of dengue fever was first recognized in 1994–1995 [7]. Subsequently, many epidemics have been reported from different regions of Pakistan. In recent years, transmission has increased significantly, particularly in the post-monsoon period, and floods have also contributed to the rise in transmission [2]. In Pakistan, the number of cases of dengue fever is still on the rise. The WHO reported 1931 laboratory confirmed cases in 2006, 1226 cases in 2007,

2469 cases in 2008, 1085 cases in 2009, 11,024 cases in 2010 and 17,057 cases in 2011. A total of 4388 cases of suspected dengue fever have been reported from January 01 to September 11, 2013 [8]. However, currently, the disease typically manifests in a more severe form, with an increased number of epidemics in Pakistan [9].

The increasing incidence of dengue fever and its more severe forms clearly calls attention to the importance of health behaviors and attitudes toward the prevention of dengue, which may be enhanced by studies addressing the knowledge, attitude and practices related to dengue fever. Therefore, this study endeavored to assess knowledge and awareness among university students of interior Sindh.

Methods

Study area and participants

This study was conducted at three universities of Interior Sindh, CEAD (Centre of Excellence in Art and Design), LUMHS (Liaquat University of Medical Health Sciences) and IPR (Institute of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation). These universities were selected randomly, and the sampling technique was simple random; the sample size was 385, assuming 50% prevalence at a confidence interval of 95% with type 1 error (alpha) 5%, $SS = Z^2 \times p(1 - p)/d^2$. However, the sample size increased to 450, and the target was to complete this sample size from these three universities.

Ethical approval

The study was commenced following approval from the Institutional review board of Dow University of Health Sciences. For ethical considerations, consent was obtained from the studied universities and individual participants, and the confidentiality of information was assured.

Study design

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted during the period of April–June 2012.

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