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PRACTICE, ATTITUDE AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HEPATITIS AMONG BARBERS OF SOUTHERN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Community pharmacist actively participates in the prevention of diseases. Hepatitis can be transmitted from one patient to another. There are many risk factors associated with this transmission. Barbers are on the major risk factor for hepatitis transmission due to their low level of awareness about hepatitis. Therefore, to check out the knowledge, practices and attitude of barbers towards hepatitis, a survey was conducted in different cities of Southern Punjab. A questionnaire was developed and we interviewed the participants. The results of our study showed that knowledge about hepatitis among barbers is low but majority of barbers have very good practice of using new blade on each customer and disposing of used blades. Risk of hepatitis associated with barbers could be reduced through public demand and media campaign.

Key Words: Hepatitis, Contagious, Knowledge, Barbers, Questionnaire, Survey

Introduction:

Pharmacy practice is an emerging field of pharmaceutical sciences especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Community pharmacist actively participates in the prevention of diseases. According to WHO, the number of infected people with hepatitis are 520 million throughout the world. The estimated number of deaths through HBV is 563000 and through HCV is 366000 annually.¹ Pakistan is one of the worst affected nations because of its high population and high risk of infection. Hepatitis is among the leading causes of death especially in Southern Punjab region of Pakistan. Due to low public health awareness, low socioeconomic status, and lack of proper health facilities, rates of hepatitis infection is increasing day by day. A significant proportion of these patients is at high risk of getting liver cancer, cirrhosis and chronic active hepatitis and is source of infection for others.

“Barba” is Latin word from which the word “Barber” originates, meaning “Beard”. Hair cutting, pedicure, manicure, faces and scalps massaging, shampooing/dyeing of hairs and nail trimming are the operations which are done by barbers in Pakistan. Barber’s profession causes skin conditions, communicable diseases, and other several health diseases to their visitors.² The purpose of our study was to check out the awareness level among the barbers of southern Punjab regarding their knowledge about hepatitis, attitude and practices towards their customers.

Materials & Methods:

To check out the awareness, practices and attitude of barbers towards hepatitis, a survey-based study was conducted. A questionnaire was designed consisting of questions about information, causes and preventive measures of Hepatitis B & C. During the survey, barbers from different areas of Southern Punjab like Multan, Bahawalpur, Alipore, Lodhran & Muzaffargarh were interviewed. 40 barbers from each city were selected. In this way, total 200 barbers participated in the survey. A questionnaire was developed (Table 1) and we interviewed the participants. Each barber was to answer either Yes or No. The survey was conducted from July 2018 to June 2019.

Results:

Percentage knowledge about hepatitis among barbers is given in table 1. Knowledge about the basics of hepatitis among barbers was low (47%). 68% barbers know that hepatitis can spread from one person to other through blood transfusion or shaving instruments. 73% barbers took care of preventive measures like they used new blades for each customer, used washed towel and proper dispose of blades after use. They believe that hepatitis screening test and vaccination could prevent us from hepatitis. They think that treatment on time could prevent from this disease. 60% barbers had knowledge about the causes of hepatitis. They knew that by using same blade on more than one customer and the usage of unsterilized instruments could cause hepatitis. Majority of the barbers taking part in our study were 20-25 years old and most of them were uneducated.

Table 1: Percentage knowledge about hepatitis among barbers

No.	Question	% Knew
1.	Have you any knowledge about Hepatitis?	64%
2.	Do you know about types of Hepatitis?	31%
3.	Are you a Hepatitis Patient?	6%
4.	Any information about the causes of Hepatitis?	44%
5.	Do you think it can be prevented or not?	77%
6.	Infected person's blood could transfer Hepatitis?	70%
7.	Hepatitis B & C could cause cancer?	70%
8.	Have you ever been Vaccinated?	34%
9.	New blade should be used for each customer?	98%
10.	Do you use new blade for every customer?	98%
11.	Daily, washed towel should be used. Do you do so?	91%
12.	Wash your hand after a shave or hair cut?	86%
13.	Hepatitis B & C could be transmitted through shaving instruments?	88%
14.	Do you dispose of blades properly?	92%
15.	Do you think your profession could cause health hazards of Hepatitis?	45%

Discussion:

The results of our study showed that barbers are not well aware about the basics of hepatitis, its causative agents and preventive measures. Similar studies have been conducted in the past. According to WHO, in South Asia, each person receives four injections per year and most of which are undesirable and unsafe. Syringes are used on more than one patient and sterility of injections is also not maintained. These syringes are the potential risk factors for hepatitis in Pakistan. Studies have shown that sharing of razor or shaving form barbers are also the key risk factors for hepatitis transmission. Only 13% barbers had knowledge that hepatitis was the liver damaging disease and could be transmitted by razor.³

In Pakistan, large population visits the barbers every day. In a study, 98% barbers believed that new blade should be used on each customer for shave or haircut.⁴ This study also showed that trend of vaccination among barbers were also low which was only 33%. 92% barbers disposed of used blades properly.

Another study showed that among males, 66.7% cases of hepatitis resulted from going to barbers for shaving. Sometimes, barbers themselves also exposed to blood or body fluids of their hepatitis customer.⁵

Our study showed that majority of barbers were young and despites going to schools or colleges, they move towards barber's shop for practice, then how could these people be aware of hepatitis? Therefor government or NGOs

should take steps to aware these people about hepatitis, so that the prevalence of this lethal disease could be minimized.

Conclusion:

Our study concluded that the knowledge about hepatitis among barbers is very low but their attitude and practice using new blade on each customer and proper disposal of used blades are very good.

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