

PSYCHO-SOCIAL ISSUES

Survey of knowledge, attitude and practice of epilepsy among 535 schoolteachers in five cities of Pakistan

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Background and Objective: Epilepsy is one of the most common and stigmatizing neurological disorder. It has been considered to be infectious, insanity and evil-spirit.¹ Even in the developed world teachers have significant deficits in terms of general knowledge about epilepsy, its impact in educational settings, and the appropriate management of seizures in the classroom.² Attitude of schoolteachers towards epilepsy is likely to have an important impact in the schooling of children with epilepsy. The purpose of the present study is to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of epilepsy among schoolteachers. No such study was previously conducted in Pakistan.

Methods: This study is a part of School Awareness Workshops held under Comprehensive Epilepsy Control Programme of Pakistan (under intimation of ILAE/IBE/WHO Global Campaign Against Epilepsy). Fourteen workshops were conducted in 5 cities using a questionnaire with 15 questions.

Results: Of the 560 respondents, the 535 correctly filled questionnaires were analyzed. The teachers were from government (83.2%) and private (16.8%) schools; females 61.5% and males 38.5%. The mean-age of the respondents was 37.0±9.2 years: females 35.3±9 years and males 39.7±9 years. Education level were: master 40.2%, graduate 37.2%, higher-secondary certificate 12.9% and secondary certificate 9.7%. Thirty-four percent “had met” and 27.1% “were acquainted with” persons with epilepsy. For the prevalence, the responses were: “less common” (54.8%), “uncommon” (27.9%) and “very common” (11.8%). For the age of epilepsy sufferers, the responses were: “any age” (69.0%) and “young age” (17.6%). The responses for aetiology were: “stress and tension” (37.4%), “abnormal electrical discharges in brain” (55.0%) and “supernatural/possessed/magic” (0.6%). Epilepsy was considered: a harmless disease (34.4%), not a disease (14.0%), hereditary (21.5%) and transmissible (10.1%). For epilepsy semiology, the responses were: “unconsciousness/convulsions” (75.3%), “disconnection/behaviour-change” (7.3%) and both (14.0%). For first-aid measure, the responses were: “lay in bed” (49.9%) “smell a shoe” (15.7%) and “put a spoon in the mouth” (21.1%). For effectiveness of treatment, the responses were: effective up to 90% (39.6%), success up to 50% (22.6%) and uncertain (20.8%). For the availability of AEDs, the responses were: “most AEDs available in Pakistan” (43.6%), “one or two AEDs available” (28.2%) and “unaware” (21.9%). Very few (10.8%) said they could name an AED, but only 8.2% named it correctly. The attitude to schooling were: “persons with epilepsy can study in normal schools” (75.1%), “cannot study in normal schools” (10.7%) and “can study in normal schools but in a separate classroom” (8.0%). Most (49.5%) believed that persons with epilepsy could be a successful schoolteacher or a sportsperson. For the impact of the society, the responses were: “negative impact” (47.9%), and “no impact” (37.4%). As for marriage/having-children, the responses were: “should get married” (73.8%), “should have children” (70.3%). The mean KAP-score was 55.6%. The responses were independent of age and gender, but they were influenced by educational level.

Conclusion: There were many misunderstandings about epilepsy among schoolteachers in Pakistan. However, the attitude of the teachers towards epilepsy was generally positive. Majority believed that students with epilepsy should be in normal schools.

References

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