

**Short Communication****NEED FOR INCORPORATING ANTICIPATORY GUIDANCE ON ANIMAL BITES AND PREVENTION OF RABIES IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM**Pawar AB<sup>1</sup>, Bansal RK<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, <sup>2</sup>Professor and Head, Dept. of Community Medicine, SMIMER, Surat-395 010, Gujarat.**Correspondence:** drabpawar@yahoo.com**INTRODUCTION**

Rabies has plagued mankind since ancient times. Rabies is a 100 per cent fatal disease, which can be very effectively prevented by timely and proper wound management and immuno-prophylaxis. Water acts as a barrier to rabies. Australia, China (Taiwan), Cyprus, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Malta, New Zealand, the U.K. and the islands of Western Pacific are all free of the disease. The Liberian peninsula and Finland, Norway and Sweden are also rabies free.<sup>1</sup> In India, Union Territory of Lakshdweep and Andaman and Nicobar islands are free of the disease.<sup>2</sup> Since our topographical location would never permit eradication of rabies, we would have to rely on education of public on animal bites and its management.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

We had carried out a cross-sectional study in slums of Surat city among 222 subjects who had a history of animal bite in the past one year, in the first quarter of the year 2007. This study was carried out to know the treatment seeking behavior for dog bites among this population.

**RESULTS**

It is clearly evident from the findings from the below mentioned table that more than half of the victims were less than 20 years of age. As revealed from earlier work, the overwhelming numbers of victims in India belong to the age group of 1-24 years.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Age of the animal bite victims**

| Age (Yrs.) | Number (%)  |
|------------|-------------|
| 1-10       | 49 (22.1)   |
| 11-20      | 64 (28.8)   |
| 21-30      | 52 (23.4)   |
| 31-40      | 29 (13.8)   |
| 41-50      | 15 (6.7)    |
| 51-60      | 12 (5.4)    |
| 61-70      | 0 (0.0)     |
| 71-80      | 1 (0.45)    |
| Total      | 222 (100.0) |

**DISCUSSION**

In India most of the human rabies cases have resulted from dog-bites. Children less than 15 years of age are more likely to provoke a dog resulting in a bite. Younger children may not realize that their playful actions may cause an angry or defensive reaction from a dog. Others speculate that behaviors gradually regarded as provocation may be interpreted by a dog as an invasion of their territory and may incite an attack.

Since young children are more prone to provoke a dog resulting in bite, they should be the natural recipients of anticipatory guidance by parents and teachers. There is a need to sermonize kids right from their pre-primary stage on how to behave with dogs, and in primary or secondary classes on how to deal with dog bites. This is particularly imperative considering the extremely fatal nature of rabies. Education department needs to draw attention towards incorporating of this vital issue in school curricula.

Furthermore, infants and young children should never be left unsupervised around any dog, no matter how friendly the dog may appear. Very often children are seen fondling with their pet dogs. Hugging and kissing a dog expresses a sense of submission to the animal, which is confusing, because the animal is used to viewing humans as being in charge.<sup>3</sup> This confusion may lead to a more aggressive behavior by the animal.

Dogs have a tendency to chase a moving object. Therefore, children need to learn to avoid running and screaming in the presence of dogs. Also, dogs should not be greeted by presenting an outstretched hand. It is helpful not to pet a dog without letting it sniff you first.

**CONCLUSION**

There is a need for incorporating anticipatory guidance on animal bites and prevention of rabies among school going children through a phased manner in curricula.

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