

Preventing Tragedies Through Immunization: The Importance of Education and Access

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Sir,

Rabies is a vaccine-preventable disease of public health interest. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), of all the rabies-related deaths worldwide, India is accountable for 36%, this increases to 65% share amongst the Southeast Asian region.¹ In India, intramuscular (IM) and intradermal (ID) vaccines are given according to the Thai Red Cross Schedule. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) regimen is either five IM doses, (one per visit on days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28) or eight ID doses (two doses per visit on days 0, 3, 7, 28).² Depending on bite category immunoglobulins are also administered.

Importance of Vaccination: Despite tireless efforts from the health care providers, government, and non-government organizations, we are seeing instances from both rural and urban areas regarding rabies deaths. According to recent reports at various places few old men had stray dog bites. Unfortunately, they had not taken the anti-rabies vaccine or immunoglobulins.^{3,4} This could be either due to their negligence, complacency or lack of knowledge re-

gards the same. This tragedy could have been prevented if they had received the vaccine and immunoglobulins. This is deeply concerning, and it is a stark reminder of the importance of immunization in preventing them. Individuals may refuse vaccines due to variety of reasons such as personal beliefs, lack of knowledge or misinformation. However, the consequences of not vaccinating with respect to rabies could be severe and fatal as evident from these cases.

Efforts of Healthcare Facilities: Rabies as all know is a fatal disease but thanks to researchers and healthcare providers that with timely wound management and immunization, the individual can be well protected. The healthcare facilities in India and across the world are doing a great job at the primary care level itself in tackling Rabies, by proper wound management and prompt immunization with vaccine and immunoglobulins, but questions do arise when some of the vaccinated people die, and experts call for improper techniques while giving intradermal rabies vaccine (IDRV).⁵

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Addressing the Issue: It is high time to address the issue by increasing awareness among the public, providing support, increasing availability and accessibility. This can be achieved through communication, providing accurate information about vaccines, and addressing any concerns or misconceptions that may exist. Even the WAME (The World Association of Medical Editors) had to write a letter to Facebook in 2019 to censor content regards to misinformation through social media. It is also important that we take measures to educate individuals about the importance of vaccination and dispel any myths or misconceptions that may exist. It is crucial that we provide accessible and affordable vaccination options to ensure that everyone can protect themselves from preventable illnesses.

In conclusion, it is our collective responsibility to take measures in educating and supporting individuals to make informed decisions about immunization. To ensure that everyone has access to vaccines that are affordable, effective along with competent health care providers. Dog bite management should be integrated and comprehensively managed.

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