

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Outbreak of Dengue Fever in Pakistan and its Prevention

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This year in Pakistan as of November 2019, approximately 44,000 people were diagnosed with Dengue and 66 had died. In 2011, this number was 27,000 but the reported deaths were six times higher compared to this year¹. This implies that the awareness campaigns have proved successful resulting in increased awareness of the disease due to early intervention. However, the preventive aspect is still a neglected area and almost two times more people were infected by the disease.

Through this esteemed journal, I would like to emphasize on the prevention and early treatment of this disease which can be life threatening. Dengue is spread by the bite of the female *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito. This mosquito lives in and around the houses and can be found under beds and dark places. *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito lives and breeds in clean stagnant water such as in water receptacles, bathrooms, gardens and close to human habitat². As the mosquito breeds indoors, it is essential to have effective measures for its control. Infection spreads after a mosquito bites a person infected and suffering from dengue fever. The mosquito then becomes infected after biting an infected person and in 8-10 days can infect another person. Henceforth, other members of the family can also get infected.

The *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito bites mostly in the morning as day light breaks, however it can continue to do so throughout the day till sunset. This makes it important for offices and houses to ensure that they are mosquito free through frequent spraying and use of mosquito nets on windows and doors. The single best method of prevention is avoiding mosquito bites. Mosquito repellents should be used especially when going out of house. Mosquito repellents should particularly be used when visiting a patient of Dengue as infected mosquitoes may be in the house. Avoiding dark coloured clothes and keeping arms and legs covered is also recommended.

The other important precaution for limiting the illness is to identify early signs of disease. Some people may have mild or no symptoms, however a quarter of the infected ones develop moderate to severe symptoms. Symptoms include fever: headache, eye pain, muscle pain and weakness, nausea and vomiting and most importantly any unusual bleeding from nose, gums or unusual bruising³. Mainstay of the treatment of mild to moderate Dengue is symptomatic including prevention of dehydration through adequate oral or intravenous fluids. Medication like Aspirin and other Non-Steroids should be avoided.

Severe dengue is an emergency and has high mortality rate. Bleeding from any site, drowsiness, confusion, and inability to tolerate oral fluids are red flags and such patients should be urgently referred to hospitals. Fumigation of high epidemic areas by the government and raising awareness are important strategies for prevention of Dengue.

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that we should keep our environment clean and should not have any stagnant water in and around the house or place of work. We should protect ourselves from mosquito bites throughout the day and use mosquito repellents if we are going out. We should recognize the signs of dengue and get early treatment.

References

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