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AWARENESS OF COVID-19 AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS IN HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN REGION: A QUESTIONNAIRE BASED SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: COVID 19 has become a major public health concern in recent times with detrimental effects on health and economy of the nation. The aim of this study is to assess the awareness of COVID 19 among school teachers of different schools

Methods A questionnaire was prepared and made in the form of an online forum which was sent out to 10 different schools for teachers to respond. The survey was conducted between April and June 2020. The responses recorded were subjected to statistical analysis with SPSS 18 software for windows. (Version 18.0)

Results The questionnaire was sent across to about 500 participants and 218 responded, with a response rate of 43.6%. It was observed that the awareness of COVID 19 was very decent among the participants but knowledge was lacking in the aspects of symptoms and treatment. The gender difference did not have any correlation with the accuracy of responses given.

Conclusion Our study showed that the teachers in Hyderabad were adequately aware about COVID 19 and its impact on the society. However, the need for education and awareness still exists. School teachers play a pivotal role in educating and shaping the citizens of tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION

COVID 19 is an ongoing pandemic caused by novel corona virus 2019 (2019 n-CoV) and is a major global health concern. Novel corona virus began as an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei province of China in December 2019 [1]. It was declared as a pandemic by the WHO on 11th March, 2020[2] and COVID 19 has spreading to more than 188 countries and territories [3]. As of July 2020, there are over 12,291,645 confirmed cases and the disease has claimed more than 555,324 lives globally [3]. Currently, The United States of America leads the chart in the burden of Corona virus followed by Brazil and India. India as of today has about 793,802 active cases which are only increasing by the day. The first confirmed death was on 9th January, 2020 in Wuhan, China [4].

About 260,597,000 out of India's 1,380,270,828 population [5] belong to the demography of school going children, i.e. from classes one to twelve. It is thus understood that a very large portion of the country's population lies in this sphere, and so it is necessary to efficiently educate this section, and for that efficient educators are the basic requirement. This questionnaire-based study was carried out among the school teachers of different schools to assess the level of awareness with regards to COVID 19.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This survey was conducted in Hyderabad metropolitan region, in the state of Telangana, India. The period of the survey was during the months of April to June 2020. The survey was in the form of an online questionnaire was sent out to 10 schools in the city and the forms was designed to be filled in by all teachers (pre-primary to senior secondary). The questions were formulated in a way that would test the participants on their knowledge attitude and perceptions towards the disease It also included questions related to disease prevention, methods of testing, isolation and gravity of the condition. The questions were drafted in simple English language from authentic resources.

The questionnaire was sent across to about 500 participants and 218 responded, the response rate being 43.6%. Consent was obtained from the respective school authorities to conduct this survey. The study was approved by the institution ethics committee of our hospital. Data entry and statistical analysis were performed with statistical package for social science software program for windows (Version 18.0). Descriptive statistics, such as percentages, mean and standard deviations were calculated. Independent t-test is used to compare knowledge with gender and p value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

A total of 218 school teachers belonging to Hyderabad City responded to the survey, out of which 16.5% were males and 83.5% were females. With the advancement in communication technology like social and electronic media, majority of the teachers were aware regarding the disease through media Only a bleak 2.3% claimed to have heard about it from their workplace. (Figure 1).

All the participants knew where COVID-19 originated from, but only 75.2% of them were accurate about what Covid-19 is. At the same time only 72.5% knew what exactly the symptoms of COVID-19 are. It was interesting to note that 87.2% of the participants knew the correct incubation period of the disease,

which is 2-14 days. But there was a significant number that was not aware about whether or not one could contract the infection from a person with no symptoms, and how long a person with Covid would need isolation at home after getting discharged from a hospital. While 13.8% of the responders had a fair idea about how the virus spreads, 86.2% of the participants were accurate about all the methods of its spread.
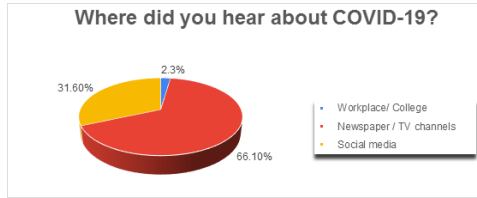

Figure 1. Sources Of Information Regarding The Disease.

Coming to the testing, there was an equal number who knew and did not know the specific test. While only 32.6% of the responders had an idea about the treatment available, 61.9% of them were fairly aware about the death rate in India which is, according to the Union Health Ministry around 3.3% [6]. Almost all responders were successful in the choosing the right answer about what their immediate response to Covid-19 symptoms would be i.e., to report to a health facility. Regarding the kind of masks recommended for general public, only 37.6% of the responders had the correct answer, which was cloth masks. The responses to the questions are shown in (Table 1). With a p-value of 0.922, the comparison of males and females with reference to correctness of responses was not significant (Table 2).

Table 1. Knowledge About The Disease Based On Responses.

		CORRECT		INCORRECT	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	What is COVID-19?	164	75.2%	54	24.8%
2.	Where did COVID-19 originate?	218	100%	0	0%
3.	What are the symptoms of COVID-19?	158	72.5%	60	27.5%
4.	Which of the symptoms are unlikely to be COVID-19?	73	33.5%	145	66.5%
5.	Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who is not having any symptoms?	130	59.6%	88	40.4%
6.	How long does it take for the symptoms of disease to appear after contracting the infection?	190	87.2%	28	12.8%
7.	How long does a person with Covid require home isolation after getting discharged from hospital?	127	58.3%	91	41.7%
8.	How does Corona virus spread?	188	86.2%	30	13.8%
9.	Do you know any specific test for COVID-19?	109	50%	109	50%
10.	Do you know any treatment for COVID-19?	71	32.6%	147	67.4%
11.	Do you know the percentage of death in a person infected with COVID-19 in India?	135	61.9%	83	38.1%
12.	Your immediate response to COVID-19 symptoms.	213	97.7%	05	2.3%
13.	Which mask is recommended for general public to prevent the spread of COVID-19?	82	37.6%	136	62.4%
14.	Do you know how to prevent the spread?	207	95%	11	5%

Table 2. Insignificant Sex Difference In The Correctness Of Responses.

Demographic	Mean±SD	P-Value
Gender		
Male	9.44±1.6	.922
Female	9.47±1.9	

DISCUSSION

Covid-19 has been the most discussed fearful current topic since it's outbreak in March 2020. India is recording its highest single day peak with about 26,000 fresh cases we as we write this discussion [7]. Telangana itself is taking shape as a hotspot for the corona virus with about 30,946 cases reported so far, Hyderabad bearing most of the burden [8].

Schools undoubtedly play a very major role in the lives of children and every child most often looks up to their teachers as role models in every walk of life. Instances where children have given more importance to what their teachers say than what their parents do is not uncommon. Teachers therefore are extremely influential and unknowingly have access to a very large section of the community. By educating the children, they also have a chance to indirectly reach their parents, and other family members and friends. Children are curious, their inherent nature is to learn about new things, they are quick learners and are very easily adaptable. It is therefore important to teach them the right things, especially during a pandemic where they are at risk at being one of the most vulnerable groups to be affected. It is crucial to steer them in the right way. This can be achieved only by making sure that their teachers know the right things, and are equipped enough to be the right influencers.

Though the ongoing pandemic has caused disruption of normal functioning of schools, the teaching community has been phenomenal in establishing a parallel schooling system on a digital platform. The teachers therefore can impart a lot of knowledge and encouragement to young children about how they can be protected even in times where they cannot physically interact with them. It is expected that the kids might be emotionally disturbed with this sudden strange change in their routine and it would only help if their teachers can guide them in overcoming their fears and address their psychosocial needs. Maharashtra's Aurangabad city had a teacher who created a nursery rhyme in Marathi to teach her children 20 second hand washing routine [9]. Teachers have always been enthusiastic, and often do their best to reach their students in ways that suit them. The responsibility thus lies on teachers to be aware of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic because they can be a good source to many thousands of people.

Schools typically engage in and promote group activities such as assemblies, sports etc which in the given circumstance is not advisable. Teachers therefore are expected to know the importance of social distancing and basics of prevention and protection from COVID-19. It is uncertain when school might re-open, and when things will get back to normal and hence it is pertinent for teachers to be prepared for any situation. In a setting where the virus is rampantly spreading, our study, which to the best of our knowledge, is the first to survey the awareness of the teaching community in Hyderabad city concluded that the teachers do have adequate knowledge about basics of Covid-19 and its spread and prevention.

The study showed no significant difference in the knowledge between male and female teachers, and the all the responders who happened to be predominantly female, were rightly aware of most of the facts. While more than 95% of the responders were accurate about its prevention and their immediate response to symptoms; there were only a few numbers that were correct regarding the right kind of face masks (only 37.6% answered correct), and regarding the

treatment (32.6% answered correct). This could possibly be linked to the lack in detail in the broadcast of awareness and information. More technical questions such as what Covid-19 is, its symptoms, its specific test, etc saw a positive answer rate ranging from 55-75%. A more complicated question which was if Covid-19 could be caught from an individual who is asymptomatic saw 59.6% of the responders seeming to know the right answer. Authentic reports have indicated that people with no symptoms can transmit the virus [10].

CONCLUSION

Our study showed that most school teachers in Hyderabad city were aware of what Covid-19 is, and were reasonably informed about its load and effect on the community and also about its prevention. There were however aspects about the virus which the responders did not know enough about. With the virus spreading far and wide, it is very crucial that the general public, especially the vulnerable groups are thoroughly informed so that they don't get consumed by presumptions and the fear that comes with it.

It is the responsibility thus, of higher authorities to further educate and fiercely spread awareness among this population as they are the most influential and are capable of disseminating their knowledge to a much larger sphere of individuals. The bad news is everyone is a potential victim, but the good news is everyone is a potential solution.

It is the duty of the government and the health care administration to make sure everyone who is capable of playing a vital role in fighting this pandemic is actively involved, and well-informed. Appropriate online webinars and workshops can be designed to do the same. Overall, the results of this survey can be taken to be optimistic, in that the majority of teachers in Hyderabad city are adequately aware about the Covid-19 virus.

Limitations of this study included a small geographical region with limited number of participants. Further, the teachers from private schools were only included in the study as approaching the government school teachers was practically difficult due to the lockdown.

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