

Knowledge and Attitude of People toward Epilepsy in a Tertiary Care Hospital of West Bengal

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Abstract

Background: Epilepsy still remains a neglected issue in many developing countries. The disease is prevalent in all social strata and among all ages. Preventive public health awareness is necessary to address the ill effects of stigma and misconception. The present study was conducted to study awareness among the patient attending tertiary care hospital.

Methodology: A hospital based cross-sectional study was done among 200 non-epileptic people. A predesigned, structured schedule was used containing questions to assess knowledge and attitude toward epilepsy. The schedule used was printed in local language and applied to the sample population after taking verbal consent.

Results: Present study revealed overall good knowledge. More than half stated that the disease can be treated with modern drugs and should not skip medicine. About 62% thought that epilepsy result in hindrance in education. 80% felt that these patients should under care of any doctor.

Conclusion: The improvement in the Knowledge and attitude of people toward epilepsy is still lags behind. Therefore awareness generation among people is needed to overcome the situation.

Keywords: Epilepsy, Knowledge,, Attitude, Modern drugs, Awareness

Introduction

Epilepsy is one of the common neurological disorders affecting more than 50 million people worldwide. Burden of newly diagnosed epilepsy cases is estimated 2.4 million every year and nearly 80% cases are found in low- and middle-income countries (LAMICs)¹. Due to the peculiar nature of symptoms and lack of knowledge regarding the disease it is often associated with fear, myth and misconceptions. Stigma attached to epilepsy results into greater burden of the disease, influences treatment seeking behaviour² and also had severe personal, familial and social impact³. Despite the existence of effective an inexpensive treatment¹, nearly 40 million people do not receive appropriate treatment⁴. Up to 70% of people with epilepsy could be seizure free if they received treatment with oral antiepileptic medicines¹. Understanding knowledge, attitude with respect to epilepsy is important step towards alleviating the role of myth and misconception in society⁵. This study aims to find out knowledge and attitude of people toward epilepsy in a tertiary care hospital.

Material And Methods

The study was conducted at General OPD of a Tertiary care Hospital of West Bengal between 1st November to 30th November 2018. In General OPD all patients with minor ailments get treatment others are referred to specific department according to their complaint. The study population included new patients attending General OPD within the fixed period and without any serious disorder. A systematic random sampling method was followed and every 5th consented patient was included in the study. The aims and objectives were explained to the study subjects before data collection. At the end of one month, response obtained from total 200 non epileptic patients.

A predesigned, structured validated schedule containing questions on Knowledge, attitude and management related to epilepsy was used. First part of the schedule also containing questions to assess socio demographic profile of the study subjects. The schedule was translated in local language beforehand. Data was entered into Microsoft Excel 8.0 software and finally analysed with the help of SPSS 16.0 version.

Result

Socio-demographic profile

A total of 200 patients were participated in the study. More than 50% were belonged to the age group of 21-40 years. 52.5% population was male and more than 50% were from socioeconomic class 4 and 5 (lower middle class and lower class) according to Modified Prasad's scale 2016. 31% had completed secondary education and about 19% completed graduation.

Table no 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of study population (N=200)

Variables	Number	Percentage (%)	
Age Group	<=20 years	10	5.0%
	21 - 40 years	101	50.5%
	41 - 60 years	80	40.0%
	> 60 years	9	4.5%
Sex	Female	95	47.5%
	Male	105	52.5%
Religion	Hindu	140	70.0%
	Muslim	54	27.0%
	Others	6	3.0%
Residence	Rural	113	56.5%
	Urban	87	43.5%
Occupation	Professionals	9	4.5%
	clerks	36	18.0%
	Homemaker	66	33.0%
	Business	53	26.5%
	Agricultural worker	21	10.5%
	Daily labour	11	5.5%
	Unemployed	4	2.0%
Socialclass	I	14	7.0%
	II	37	18.5%
	III	36	18.0%
	IV	63	31.5%
	V	50	25.0%
Literacy status	Illeterate	25	12.5%
	Below primary	3	1.5%
	Middle	35	17.5%
	Secondary	62	31.0%
	Higher Secondary	37	18.5%
	Graduate and above	38	19.0%

Maritalstatus	Married	161	80.5%
	Unmarried	39	19.5%

Knowledge

All individuals had heard about epilepsy. 61% knew any person with epilepsy. About 61% knew both the symptoms (loss of consciousness and convulsion of body and limbs) of this disorder. About 27% believed that the disease runs in family. 13.5% wrongly reported that the disease is contagious. About 47% reported that epilepsy is organic brain disorder while 13.5% believe that it is due to possession by evil spirit. About 54.5% reported that the disease can be treated with modern drugs.

Table 2: Knowledge about epilepsy among the study population (N=200)

Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Heard of epilepsy	Yes	200	100.0%
	No	0	0.0%
Know anyone with Epilepsy	Yes	122	61.0%
	No	78	39.0%
Epilepsy is contagious	Yes	27	13.5%
	No	149	74.5%
	Don't know	24	12.0%
hereditary disorder	Yes	54	27.0%
	No	121	60.5%
	Don't know	25	12.5.0%
Symptoms	convulsion of B L	44	22.0%
	Loss of consciousness	17	8.5%
	Both	123	61.5%
	Don't know	16	8.0%
Type of disorder	Brain disorder	94	47.0%
	Mental disorder	30	15.0%

	Nutritional disorder	25	12.5%
	Possession by evil spirit	27	13.5%
	Don't know	24	12.0%
Treatable with modern drugs	Yes	109	54.5%
	No	63	31.5%
	Don't know	28	14.0%

Knowledge regarding management of epilepsy

About 48% believe that the disease can be treated effectively by Allopathic medicine but 8% preferred faith healing procedures as effective mode of treatment. About 80% of the study subject stated that, an epileptic patient should be always under care of doctor and 58% opined that an epileptic patient should not skip their medicine. For immediate management of any patient with seizure nearly 50% prefer to send the patient to the hospital, 48.5% would suggest throwing of water over face and 33% would hold shoes near the patient's nose.

Table 3: Knowledge related to management of patients of epilepsy among the study population (N=200)

Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Modes of treatment	Allopathic Medicine	96	48.0%
	AYUSH	20	10.0%
	Surgery	16	8.0%
	Faith Healing	16	8.0%
	Don't know	52	26.0%
	Yes	160	80.0%
	No	32	16.0%
	Don't know	8	4.0%

Should not skip medicine	Yes	116	58.0%
	No	70	35.0%
	Don't know	14	7.0%

Attitude

The attitude towards epilepsy patients revealed by this study was average. 57% of the study subjects mentioned positive attitude with respect to normal married life. 55% felt that the diseased persons may be gainfully employed. 62% of the respondent thought that the disease doesn't cause hindrance to education and 41% believed that the society discriminates with the people with epilepsy.

Table 4: Attitude towards epilepsy among the study population (N=200)

Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Can lead married life	Yes	114	57.0%
	No	77	38.5%
	Don't know	9	4.5.0%
Can be employed	Yes	110	55.0%
	No	80	40.0%
	Don't know	10	5.0%
Affects education of a person	Yes	74	37.0%
	No	124	62.0%
	Don't know	2	1.0%
Society discriminates against persons with epilepsy	Yes	82	41.0%
	No	106	53.0%
	Don't know	12	6.0%

Discussion

Present study with cross-sectional design revealed that all respondent (100%) had heard about the disease epilepsy. Similar pattern of finding reported by Krishnaiah et al

(88.7%)⁶ and Radhakrishnan et al (99%)⁷. About 61% of the study subjects knew at least one person with epilepsy which is higher than the study done in Uttarakhand⁸. Nearly 14% believe that the disease is contagious in nature, similar to the study of Radhakrishnan et al (12%)⁷. Another study reported only 1%². 27% of the respondent believe it is a hereditary disorder, which was significantly higher in comparison to study from Delhi (3.3%)² whereas, Krishnaiah et al⁶ reported 31%. The study revealed that about 62% knew about both the symptoms (loss of consciousness and convulsion) of epilepsy. Nearly half of the study subjects believe that the disease is a brain disorder; mental disorder (15%). 13.5% felt the disease is due to possession by evil spirit, similar to Delhi study². More than half of the respondents believe that the disease is treatable with modern drugs which is significantly less than Delhi study (92%)² and study of Radhakrishnan et al (78%)⁷. The attitude toward leprosy in this study was far less negative than the other Indian studies. Nearly 55% respondent felt that the disease does not affect married life and may be gainfully employed. Study from Uttarakhand⁸ found that it causes hindrance to married life (76.3%) and sexual life (75.4%). Only 37% thought that the disease affects education of a person which is less in comparison to other studies^{8,6}. Regarding discriminative attitude towards people with epilepsy, 41% responded positively which corroborated with the results of Krishnaiah et al⁶ study. More respondent (48%) had faith over allopathic treatment than AYUSH (10%), but still 8% believe in faith healing. About dependency on faith healing procedure Gambhir et al⁹ reported similar result (6%) in contrast to the study from Delhi² (19.2%). About 80% study subjects believed that every epileptic patient should be under care of any doctor for the sudden unpredictable nature of the symptoms, but only

58% agreed with the fact of taking medicine on a regular basis. In response to immediate management of seizure nearly 50% preferred to send the patient to hospital which corroborated with the result of Uttarakhand⁸ study (49.8%). 33% stated they would prefer to hold shoe on nose and 48.5% would splash water over face. Study from Malwa region¹⁰ found 50% would sprinkle water on face. Krishnaiah et al⁶ reported nearly 70% would hold bunch of keys near nose to terminate epileptic attack, 40% reported by Uttarakhand⁸ study.

Conclusion

Attitude and practice are usually positively related to the knowledge background of any person, which is especially applicable with the ancient disease like epilepsy. But the findings from our study depict good knowledge but on the other hand findings of attitude and management regarding the disease were not so encouraging. Individual and community based preventive health education is needed to address the situation.

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