



Knowledge, Attitude, Practice With Respect To Epilepsy Among 12th Class Students

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Abstract: Epilepsy remains a major public health problem in developing countries, not only because of its health problems but also for its social, cultural, psychological and economic effects. The burden of epilepsy is frequently larger than the disease itself due to the stigma linked to the condition and common misconceptions about it. School children are particularly impacted as they are developing and engage on many different levels. So this study intends to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice about epilepsy among school students. Descriptive cross-sectional study was under taken in 100 12th class students. Self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. 62% students answered correctly in knowledge domain, 51% showed positive attitude in attitude domain and 43% answered correctly in practice domain. Only 8% students were exposed in management of epilepsy patient. 12th class students have average knowledge about epilepsy. But they are poor in attitude and practice regarding epilepsy. There is a need to include health education programs for school children regarding epilepsy.

Keywords – epilepsy, knowledge, Attitude and Practices.

INTRODUCTION

Epilepsy is an ancient disorder that affects people of all ages. It is a neurological disorder characterised by seizures that are unpredictable in frequency¹. A seizure is a transient disturbance of the cerebral function secondary to abnormal paroxysms in the brain, which results in a sudden excessive disorderly discharge of the cerebral neurons². Worldwide prevalence rate of epilepsy varies from 2.8 to 19.5 per 1,000 of the general population³. Epilepsy remains a major public health problem in developing countries, not only because of its health problems but also for its social, cultural, psychological and economic effects⁴. People with epilepsy are prone to develop variety of psychological issues including depression, anxiety etc.

The burden of epilepsy is frequently larger than the disease itself due to the stigma linked to the condition and common misconceptions about it⁵. Sociocultural attitudes continue to cause a negative impact on the management of epilepsy, overall quality of life, including education, employment, and marriage, having children, and accruing social benefits. Even though epilepsy is a clinically curable condition, it has an adverse effect on the social identity of the patients due to the wrong beliefs in the communities. Wrong perceptions about the causes of epilepsy are prevalent among people. Many believe that epilepsy results from insanity, witchcraft or possession by evil spirits. Social discrimination against people with epilepsy is also influenced by a lack of first aid skills.

School children are particularly impacted as they are developing and engage on many different levels. They frequently express feeling different from their classmates and are afraid of having seizures in front of their friends, which leads to adjustment issues including low self-esteem⁶. In order to reduce the stigma that epileptic children experience at school, it is crucial to educate youngsters about epilepsy. In addition, children have the potential to influence the society and they are the future of the nation. So this study intends to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice about epilepsy among school students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study population

100 12th class students from St.Mary's Higher Secondary School, Kaliyal, Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu

Operational definitions

Scientific facts were evaluated in knowledge area. Personal views of the participant with respect to epilepsy were assessed under attitude area. Minimum skills required in initial management of epilepsy case were assessed under practice area.

Sampling procedure

All the students at present studying in 12th std, willing to participate in the study voluntarily were included in the study

Sample size

100 students present on scheduled day were included for the study.

Data collection

Data were collected through questionnaire based on previous studies^{10, 11}. The survey questionnaire contained 24 questions with simple yes or no responses. Questions 1-11 for knowledge, Q12-Q21 for attitude and Q22-Q24 were there for testing the practice about epilepsy.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed with MS Excel worksheet. Results were expressed in terms of percentage.

RESULTS

There were a total of 100 participants, 44 boys and 56 girls.

Knowledge:

Out of the total number of survey participants, 73% had heard or read about epilepsy. About 39 % of the respondents did not know that epilepsy is not a mental illness, 43% said that epilepsy is a hereditary disease, 28% reported that epilepsy is an infectious disease and contagious, 34% believed that there is no cure for epilepsy. 45% students said that all epileptic patients need lifelong treatment, 54% thought that children with epilepsy need special class room. 69% respondents correctly identified epilepsy is recurrent abnormal electrical discharge in the brain, 71% knew that epilepsy present as staring spell with sudden transient loss of awareness, 78% students said that epilepsy can occur at any age, 70% recognised epilepsy as a brain disorder. Table 1 describes knowledge level about epilepsy among respondents.

Table 1 Knowledge of epilepsy

Sl.No.	Knowledge of epilepsy	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Have you heard/ read about epilepsy?	73	27
2.	Is epilepsy a mental illness?	39	61
3.	Is epilepsy a hereditary disease?	43	57
4.	Epilepsy is an infectious disease and contagious	28	72
5.	Can epilepsy be cured or controlled?	66	34
6.	Do all epileptic patients need lifelong treatment?	45	55
7.	Children with epilepsy require special classroom	54	46
8.	Epilepsy is recurrent abnormal electrical discharge in the brain	69	31
9.	Can epilepsy present as staring spell with sudden, transient loss of awareness	71	29
10.	Can epilepsy occur at any age	78	22

11.	Epilepsy is a disorder of the brain	70	30
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Attitude:

57% of Students felt that epilepsy is a hindrance to married life, 37% said that person with epilepsy can't be able to have children, 37% believed that epilepsy interferes with education. 36% of students felt epilepsy interferes with employment, 59% of the students believed that society should behave differently with persons with epilepsy, 39% said that persons with epilepsy cannot participate in games, 59% considered that driving and swimming is not safe. More than half of the students (51%) believe that people with epilepsy have lower intelligence than other people, 44% considered people with epilepsy as insane, 45% felt that education would be affected by epilepsy. Table 2 shows attitude about epilepsy among respondents.

Table 2 Attitude about epilepsy

Sl.No.	Attitude about epilepsy	Yes (%)	No(%)
1.	It is possible for a person with epilepsy to get married	43	57
2.	Can a person with epilepsy will be able to have children	63	37
3.	A person with epilepsy should not study	37	63
4.	A person with epilepsy should not work.	36	64
5.	Society should behave differently with a person with epilepsy.	59	41
6.	Can a child with epilepsy participate in games	61	39
7.	Can people with epilepsy swim and drive safely	41	59
8.	People with epilepsy have lower intelligence than other people	51	49
9.	People with epilepsy are insane	44	56
10.	Epilepsy affects education of a person	45	55

Practice:

50% students answered correctly to the questions asked about first aid management of epilepsy. Majority of the students (92%) were not involved anytime in first aid seizure management, 75% said they would be reluctant to play child with epilepsy. Table 3 describes practice regarding epilepsy among respondents.

Table 3 Practice regarding Epilepsy

Sl.No.	Practice regarding Epilepsy	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	If you see a person with epileptic fit what will you do		
	a) He should be taken to the hospital	56	44
	b) Allow fit to run its own course	44	56
	c) Loosen tight clothes	24	76
	d) Introduce something in mouth to avoid tongue bite	20	80
	e) Will give bunch of keys in hand or put some water on his face	25	75
	f) Prevent injury during the episode	20	80
	g) Water should be sprinkled over the face of a person having	20	80
	h) Place the person in a semi-prone position to prevent choking seizures	22	78
2.	Have you ever involved in first aid seizure management?	8	92
3.	Would you play with an epileptic child?	25	75

DISCUSSION

Epilepsy is a neurological condition that impairs regular brain activity because of the abnormal and excessive discharge of cerebral neurons. Due to its numerous cultural, psychological, social, and economic repercussions as well as its concomitant health implications, it is one of the main health concerns. Epilepsy-related knowledge, attitudes, and practises have been studied in many places throughout the world. There are

regional differences based on literacy levels, cultural norms, and customs. Many of the studies show inadequate KAP in study population. There are only few studies done in school students. In the present study, an attempt was made to evaluate the KAP of epilepsy among 12th class students from St.Mary's Higher Secondary School, Kaliyal, Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu.

Overall correct answers in knowledge domain were 62%. More than half of the students were correct in answering about nature of the disease, age of occurrence, and abnormality in electrical discharges. 55% believed that all epileptic patients need life-long treatment. 46% considered that children with epilepsy need special classroom. Knowledge domain needs to be strengthened. Exact knowledge about the disease will change the attitude and misconceptions. This observation is consistent with findings from related research conducted elsewhere^{9,10,12,13,14}.

Only half of the students showed positive attitude in attitude domain regarding people with epilepsy (51%). 57% of Students felt that epilepsy is a hindrance to married life, 59% of the students believed that society should behave differently with persons with epilepsy, 59% considered that driving and swimming is not safe. More than half of the students (51%) believe that people with epilepsy have lower intelligence than other people, 44% considered people with epilepsy as insane. This indicates the prevalence of misconceptions among the students.

Students were below adequacy in practice domain (43%). The knowledge for providing first aid during an epileptic episode is very poor among the participants. Majority of the students (92%) were not involved anytime in first aid seizure management. 75% said they would be reluctant to play child with epilepsy. They clearly lack the awareness and training in providing first aid during an epileptic attack. Other studies also show similar observation^{14, 15, 16}. Studies conducted with student population clearly shows that students lack KAPs regarding epilepsy^{9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16}. This study highlights the need for proper intervention to improve the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding epilepsy among school students.

CONCLUSION

Even though 12th class students in Tamil Nadu were aware of epilepsy, there were many misconceptions and unfavorable attitudes towards the condition. Therefore, ongoing awareness initiatives are required to alter these unfavourable attitudes towards epilepsy. These interventions should guarantee good communication between medical professionals, students, teachers, and parents and should emphasize both the medical and positive elements of epilepsy. They clearly lack the awareness in providing first aid during an epileptic attack. So, there is a need for proper education about the facts of epilepsy disorder and first aid management by including epilepsy studies in the school health education curriculum.

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