

AWARENESS ABOUT KALA-AZAR DISEASE AND RELATED PREVENTIVE ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES IN A HIGHLY ENDEMIC RURAL AREA OF INDIA

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Abstract. This study was undertaken to assess the extent of community awareness and related practices about kala-azar undertaken by them to control the disease, in an highly endemic focus of Bihar, India. A household-based cross-sectional knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP) survey consisting of quantitative components on knowledge, attitude, and practices concerning kala-azar was administered to heads-of-household through a semi-structured questionnaire. Data indicated that 61% respondents were illiterate, 4% had correct knowledge that sandfly bites caused kala-azar, 26% do not know any specific transmission agents for kala-azar. A majority (72%) of respondents were not able to recognize sandfly, 33% had no specific knowledge about the symptoms. All of them (100%) believed that this disease could affect his or her family income. Nearly all (95%) were positive that the kala-azar cases could be reduced with implementation of proper health measures. A few (11%) suggested isolation of patients to avoid contacting kala-azar while a high proportion (93%) of respondents favored specific allopathic medicine, and a majority (72%) favored the utilization of the services offered by primary health centers or government hospitals. Just over half (66%) of the respondents were not using any prevention measures to avoid contacting disease. These results could prove to be useful for health planners in developing suitable control strategies.

Key words: kala-azar, visceral leishmaniasis, KAP, rural India

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