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UNVEILING THE SHADOWS: EXPLORING FACTORS BEHIND THE LACK OF AWARENESS OF RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE AMONG DIAGNOSED PATIENTS

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Objectives: To assess reasons for lack of awareness regarding rheumatic heart disease among patients diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease.

Methodology: In this cross-sectional study was conducted at the outpatient department of a tertiary care cardiac centre. We included consecutive patients of either gender between 18 to 60 years of age with the established diagnosis of RHD. Their knowledge and awareness regarding the disease itself and regarding its primary and secondary prevention and treatment options was assessed with the help of a structured self-developed questionnaire. Collected data was entered and analyzed using IBM SPSS 19.

Results: A total of 502 patients were enrolled with almost equal number of male and female patients. Mean \pm SD for patient age was 37.3 ± 10.9 years. Majority had received primary school education or above. 40% of the patients were not aware of rheumatic valvular heart disease as their diagnosis. Less than half of patients knew childhood fever and sore throat as cause of their disease. 72.6% of the patients were not aware of prophylactic treatment for the disease. 77.2% were referred to a cardiologist after more than four weeks. 47.9% of patients were not properly counselled about their disease.

Conclusion: There was a very high incidence of lack of awareness regarding RHD among affected patients. Moreover, there was high incidence of inadequate physician-patient counselling about the disease and late referral to cardiologist. Healthcare providers should educate their patients, fostering community-based interventions this ultimately will lead to decrease morbidity and mortality among patients diagnosed with RHD and will help in early detection and prevention of RHD.

Keywords: Rheumatic heart disease, awareness

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