

Original Research Article

Clinico-epidemiological study of Hansen's disease patients attending a tertiary care centre in South India

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ABSTRACT

Background: Leprosy (also known as Hansen's disease) is a chronic disease caused by a slow multiplying bacillus, *Mycobacterium leprae* (*M. leprae*). Incubation period of the disease is about 5 years, but the symptoms can take as long as 20 years to appear. The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and also the eyes. Leprosy is curable with multidrug therapy (MDT). Although not highly infectious, leprosy is transmitted via droplets, from nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases. The main objectives were to describe the clinico-epidemiological profile of Hansen's disease patients.

Methods: Hospital based cross-sectional study using convenience sampling method was carried out. A total of 114 patients were enrolled in the study.

Results: Around 25.27% of males presented with ulcer at the time of examination whereas in females, the common mode of presentation was the hypo-pigmented patch (48.47%). Out of the total 114 patients 55% had already developed residual disability at the time of examination. The mean age at onset of illness for males was 34 years and 31.60 years for females. About 25% of the patients gave positive history of contact with Hansen's disease patient and the most common source of contact was another family member with the disease. On clinical examination most common nerve involved was ulnar nerve followed by lateral popliteal nerve.

Conclusions: Study recommends periodic nerve examination of patients with hypopigmented patches to identify any abnormality in nerve and patients also need to be educated on self-care.

Keywords: BCG, Hansen's disease, *Mycobacterium leprae*