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Safe sharps disposal: Knowledge, attitude and behavior among diabetic subjects attending a tertiary care hospital in Lahore, Pakistan, and the effect of counselling on the practices

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Background: The use of syringes, needles and lancets is common in every diabetic patient whether for blood glucose monitoring or for insulin treatment. Most hospitals follow well-established guidelines regarding sharps disposal. However, in the community, improper disposal of needles and syringes is common leading to needle stick injuries and predisposing domestic waste handlers, rag-pickers and the general community at high risk of communicable diseases like hepatitis B, C and HIV.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to determine the knowledge, attitude and behavior of diabetic patients related to disposal of used needles and syringes and the effect of counselling on these practices.

Methods: A cross-sectional, interventional study was conducted on 300 diabetic subjects attending a tertiary care hospital in Lahore by means of a structured 20-point questionnaire and standardized interview in appropriate community language. Data was analyzed using spss20inc. Study participants were counselled about safe sharps disposal and instructed to bring all used needles and syringes in puncture-resistant closed container on their next DMC visit.

Results: Out of 300 patients 131 (43.6%) were male and 169 (56.3%) were female. 107 (35.6%) were illiterate, 186 (63%) were unemployed and 111 (37%) were employed. 7 (6%) had hepatitis B, 20 (23%) had hepatitis C and 3 (1%) had HIV. 296 (99%) had no knowledge about proper disposal. Irrespective of any factor, 285 (95%) of the patients were throwing the sharps in dustbins, 3(1%) in the toilets, 7 (2%) outside and 6 (2%) elsewhere. 180 (60%) patients brought back the needles in boxes whereas 118 (39.3%) did not and 2 (0.6%) were lost to follow-up.

Conclusion: This study revealed that diabetic subjects attending the tertiary care hospital in Lahore, Pakistan have little knowledge of the importance of safe sharps disposal or of the risk of transmissible diseases resulting therefrom and had also not received any instructions. There was a change in the attitude and practice following counselling. Interventions to increase awareness about importance of proper sharps disposal among the diabetic population are needed. It is therefore recommended that specific health education regarding sharps disposal be routinely given to diabetic subjects.

Biography

Uneeba Syed has done her MBBS from National University Of Science and Technology (NUST) Pakistan. She has done her FCPS in Medicine and FCPS endocrinology. She is also a CRCP qualified. She is presently working as a Consultant Medical Specialist and Endocrinologist in a renowned government hospital of Pakistan.

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