Perceptions of mosquito borne diseases

We report our findings from a community based study on Knowledge Attitude Practice of community on various vector (mosquito) borne diseases, conducted in 1998. The respondents (n=850) in a sample (systematic random) were chosen from the population of 10 000 of an urban locality in India. Knowledge of mosquito being the vector for dengue was very low (0.5%), as compared with malaria (61.1%). Concerning knowledge of breeding grounds for malaria mosquitoes; most identified drained (48.6%) whereas only a few identified clean water or overhead tanks (10.9%) as a potential breeding ground. The respondents were asked what they could do to reduce or eliminate mosquitoes. Most identified chemicals (42.9%) while other respondents mentioned variety of measures like environmental hygiene, de-weeding, emptying containers, etc. The overwhelming majority of respondents (96.8%) were of the attitude that mosquito control was the government’s responsibility, very few (8%) said that it was the responsibility of the people themselves. Widely used personal protection methods against mosquitoes were; repellents (64%) and bed nets (8%). Very few of the respondents (1.1%) suggested mosquito proof screen/window for winters.

Aedes aegypti mosquito (vector for dengue) breed in small artificial collections of water like unused tyres, flower pot bases, broken bottles, etc. It is disappointing that more than 99% of respondents in our study did not know the mode of transmission for dengue, when in fact, community participation is the only effective way to prevent dengue outbreaks in the community. Behavioural theory suggests that people will be willing to put more effort into avoiding dengue if the consequences of not controlling mosquitoes seemed greater.1

Anophelines species of mosquitoes (vector for malaria) breed mainly in clean water in contrast with the most widely held perception that they breed in drains or dirty water. Some of these misperceptions have been important hurdles affecting community participation in malaria control.

Our findings highlight the importance and need for intensification of health education for vector control, particularly in tropical countries, with emphasis on community participation to control vector borne diseases.

R Kumar, S K Krishnan, N Rajasheek R R Patil, T J Cauverappa, V Maiya
Community Health Cell, no 367, Sreenivasu Nilaya, Jakkasandra 1st Main, 1st Block, Koramangala, Bangalore 560034, India
Correspondence to: Dr R Patil; rajapatil@yahoo.com

Reference