

# **KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF PATIENTS AND THEIR ATTENDANTS VISITING A FAMILY PHYSICIAN'S CLINIC**

Pages with reference to book, From 24 To 25

Dear Madam, A study was conducted to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of patients and their attendants, visiting the clinic of a family physician, regarding types and source of medical treatment, desire for immediate response to therapy, use of oral fluids and immunization status of children under 5 years of age. A questionnaire was designed and, after pretesting, 270 questionnaires were filled in by the author by interviewing first 3 adult patients and first 2 attendants of children under 5 years of age, suffering with diarrhoea, visiting the clinic on each working day from 15/4/91 to 16/6/91. Of 270 subjects interviewed, 43% were males and 57% females, with a literacy rate of 24% and 6%, respectively. The monthly income of each family ranged from Rs. 1,000 to Rs.2,000 in 86% cases, indicating that majority of the population interviewed belonged to the lower socio-economic group. Of 270 cases, 99% preferred allopathic treatment, 1% unani and none homeopathic or spiritual treatment. When first seen, 53% cases had already taken some form of the treatment, 27% took medicines from a quack, 15% from a qualified doctor, 3% underwent spiritual treatment and none took treatment from a hakim or homeopath. When enquired about their attitude towards treatment response after one day of therapy, 55% responded that they would go to the same physician, 31% changed their doctor and 14% preferred to wait and watch response to treatment. If there was no response after 2 days of treatment, 25% went to the same physician, 31% changed their doctor and 10% preferred to wait and watch the response. In case of diarrhoea in children under 5 years of age, 52% were given ORS, 19% tap water, 17% home made solutions and 6% each received either boiled water or glucose dissolved in water. Forty three percent parents had no idea about the efficacy of ORS, 41% thought that it improves while 16% thought it worsens diarrhoea. When enquired about the immunization of these children, 82% were fully immunized for their age, 10% were partially and 7% not immunized at all. Only 60% parents knew that immunization protects, 32% had no idea about its importance and 2% had wrong concepts about immunization of the various preventable diseases covered by immunization; only 52% parents could recall two or more such diseases. Similar studies should be conducted at different clinics to obtain significant results regarding knowledge, attitude and practices of patients and health education programmes be imparted to improve health standard in our population.

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