


Review Article

Increase in Animal Bites: A Growing Concern for Srinagar's inhabitants

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Abstract

Rabies is a zoonotic disease which is spread by animals to humans. Srinagar city in Kashmir, is home to more than 1 million inhabitants. According to data obtained from the Anti-Rabies Clinic (ARC) at SMHS Hospital, between April 2023 and March 2024, the ARC documented a total of 8,652 bite cases. These included 5,386 dog bite cases, 2,844 cat bite cases, 27 monkey bite cases, 95 cow bite cases, 14 bear bite cases, 12 wild boar bite cases, and 294 other bite cases involving leopards, jackals, eagles, and more. Addressing the rise animal bite cases requires a multi-faceted approach. By addressing the root causes and implementing preventative measures, it is possible to reduce the incidence of cat bites and ensure the safety and well-being of Srinagar's residents. Mutisectoral collaboration and coordination can drastically reduce the incidence of animal bite related rabies in Srinagar city.

Key words

Animal bites, Concern, Srinagar, Inhabitants.

Introduction

Rabies is a universally fatal viral disease, causing about 59,000 human deaths annually worldwide, with 95 percent of cases occurring in Africa and Asia [1].

Rabies is a zoonotic disease which is spread by animals to humans. The disease is caused by Rabies virus, which gets transmitted by saliva of rabid animal. Route of transmission is by direct contact with saliva of infected animal by bite or lick. Rabies virus attacks nervous system and it

can be weeks up to months or years that clinical rabies may develop in an individual after contact with saliva of infected animal. The case fatality of Rabies is almost 100per cent.

Health implications in Srinagar

Srinagar city in Kashmir, is home to more than 1 million inhabitants [2]. A city with rich culture and heritage, it was included in the creative cities list by UNESCO [3]. While the city strides towards development and globalization, a challenge faced by its residents is looming large: increasing number of man animal interaction resulting in increased number of animal bites. According to data obtained from the Anti-Rabies Clinic (ARC) at SMHS Hospital, between April 2023 and March 2024, the ARC documented a total of 8,652 bite cases. These included 5,386 dog bite cases, 2,844 cat bite cases, 27 monkey bite cases, 95 cow bite cases, 14 bear bite cases, 12 wild boar bite cases, and 294 other bite cases involving leopards, jackals, eagles, and more [3]. Dogs commonly attack wee hours and evening targeting mostly elderly population, ladies, and young children.

Animal bites including cat bites can pose significant health risks. They can introduce bacteria into the wound, leading to infections such as cat scratch fever and other serious complications if not properly treated. Additionally, there is a risk of rabies, which is a concern particularly with feral cat and stray dog populations that may not be vaccinated.

Considering the already overburdened hospitals in Srinagar, and lack of quality private hospitals dedicated towards animal bite cases, the management of such cases is increasingly becoming difficult. The higher costs and scarce availability of Rabies immunoglobulins and rabies vaccines adds to the problems.

Measures to prevent rabies

Addressing the rise animal bite cases requires a multi-faceted approach.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Educating the public about the risks associated with stray

animals and how to avoid bites is crucial. This includes teaching children not to approach or try to pet unknown animals. World Health Organization also stresses the importance of public health education animal behavior and prevention of bites and emphasizes the need for responsible pet ownership [4].

Vaccination and Sterilization Programs:

Implementing widespread vaccination and sterilization initiatives can help control the feral cat population and reduce the risk of disease transmission. Pre exposure prophylaxis for at risk population and post exposure vaccination regimen for exposed persons have been recommended by WHO. Taking vaccines from proper authorized medical centers which store anti rabies vaccine under standard cold chain conditions is also important.

Training and capacity building: Proper training on larger scale involving all type of care givers is needed. Increasing manpower and staff augmentation in government hospitals can also improve rabies dedicated management.

Community Involvement: Engaging community members in efforts to monitor and manage stray animal populations can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions. This includes stop feeding stray animals, prevent open littering, and proper refuse management.

Improved Reporting and Medical Response:

Encouraging prompt reporting of animal bites and ensuring quick medical treatment can help mitigate the health risks associated with these incidents. The authorities need to setup more dedicated rabies vaccination clinics around the city to improve access and prompt management of animal bite victims.

New initiatives by the government

The National Rabies Control Program (NRCP) was launched with the aim to eliminate human rabies deaths by focusing on mass dog vaccination, public education, robust surveillance, and ensuring access to post-

exposure prophylaxis. Key strategies include collaborative efforts under the One Health approach, addressing resource constraints, and promoting responsible pet ownership. Successful implementation in some countries has significantly reduced rabies cases, highlighting the importance of sustained, coordinated efforts in achieving zero human rabies deaths [5].

Conclusion

The rise in animal bite cases in Srinagar, as evidenced by the data from SMHS Hospital, highlights the need for a coordinated response involving public health officials, veterinarians, and the community. By addressing the root causes and implementing preventative measures, it is possible to reduce the incidence of cat bites and ensure the safety and well-being of Srinagar's residents. Mutisectoral collaboration and coordination can drastically reduce the

incidence of animal bite related rabies in Srinagar city.

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