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Polio dilemma: A wake-up call for Pakistan

Atta Abbas^{1, 2, 3, ✉}, Nida Yazdani³

1. Department of Pharmacy, Clifton Hospital, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

2. Department of Pharmacy, Health and Well Being, University of Sunderland, England, United Kingdom

3. Faculty of Pharmacy, Ziauddin University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Atta Abbas; Advisory Board Member, Department of Pharmacy, Clifton Hospital, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan; Tel: 0092-321-2643077; Email: bg33bd@student.sunderland.ac.uk

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ABSTRACT

Poliomyelitis or Polio has long plagued the world. A crippling disease caused by a virus known as polio virus, the disease results in destruction nerves especially in the hind limbs rendering a patient paralyzed. The disease has been eradicated the world over and only few countries such as Pakistan are now left. The story of Pakistan polio dilemma continues to haunt as the health care authorities, despite the efforts are failing to counter the disease and its spread. Recently, the international health care agencies imposed travelling regulations regarding polio which is adding to the shame and isolation of the country worldwide. The situation is a wakeup call for the authorities to revisit their strategies and counter the disease spread.

Keywords

Polio; Pakistan; travel restriction

Poliomyelitis is a contagious viral infection caused by poliovirus. It can spread from one person to another, destroying motor neurons, resulting in muscle weakness and acute flaccid paralysis. The polio vaccine helps protect and immunizes the body against this virus. Public health organizations have worked unwaveringly to wipe out polio from one and all countries and their efforts reaped success but in Pakistan the case remained gloom. (CDC. *Global Health Polio*)

Parental refusal due to lack of knowledge or lack of understanding, faulty batches, mistrust towards health care authorities as a source of medical information, access to remote areas and an ineffectual cold chain management are all in mix of tribulations faced by the government officials in the eradication program, also the security of these vaccinators and clashes between the tribe pose another serious threat to an already escalating list of extraordinary challenges.

Pakistan, is from one the very few countries left with polio virus, has been desperately trying to eradicate the disease since last 65 years but sadly due the blasé attitude of the government officials and of course poverty, geopolitical situation and ignorance have led to attaining the unenviable documentation of highest number of polio cases this year alone.

Pakistan is facing worldwide damnation with the travel restriction due to the fear of outbreak of polio and the international health care organization has made it compulsory for all travelers moving out of the country to produce a valid polio vaccine certificate from June 1st 2014. There is to be strict visa policy for travelling to or from Pakistan making it even further complicated than it already is, many are and other's will continue to endure loss of their independence with regard to movement, deferral of education abroad, having a grim impact on Pakistani education, business and economic. These travel restriction placed may appear a trivial hassle in comparison to the sanction in store for the people of Pakistan. (*Awaz.TV : Polio-related travel restrictions*)

It's a wakeup call for the health care authorities of Pakistan, a call that should not have been needed at all. Pakistan has to give its people the opportunity to discover, explore and clarify ways of living more resourcefully towards a better healthier well being and prevent its isolation worldwide.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interests exists.

Author's contribution

This commentary is based on the cascade of events encompassing current situation of the country regarding polio. AA generated the commentary and wrote the abstract. The body of the manuscript was written by NY. The final editing of the manuscript was done by AA. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Information about the authors

Nida Yazdani is an undergraduate student of Faculty of Pharmacy, Ziauddin University, Batch 06. Her research interests include pharmacy, pharmaco-vigilance and public health. Dr Atta Abbas is an Advisory Board Member at Department of Pharmacy, Clifton Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan. He is also an Assistant Professor and Academic Researcher at the Department of Pharmacy Practice, Faculty of Pharmacy, Ziauddin University, Karachi, Pakistan. He teaches Clinical Pharmacy and Advance Clinical Pharmacy to undergraduates and Clinical Pharmacy Practice, Therapeutics and Clinical Biochemistry to Post graduates. He is also in the visiting faculty of a number of clinical pharmacy teaching institutes and a member of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, UK. He has authored and co-authored a number of research publications and a book. His research work has appeared in leading scientific journals of the world including Medical Science, Discovery Publications.

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