



TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

CHILDHOOD LEPROSY IN INDIA – A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY FROM A TERTIARY CARE CENTRE

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Background: Leprosy/Hansen disease (HD) persists to be a major public-health problem in developing countries including India. Leprosy in children is a useful indicator of current status of disease transmission and the failure of the health system to control the disease in the community.

Objective: To study the clinico-epidemiological pattern of leprosy in children and adolescents ≤ 18 years of age.

Methods: A retrospective, hospital-based study of patients diagnosed with leprosy from September 2008 to August 2018 (10 years) was done in Dermatology department of a tertiary care centre in India. Demographics, clinical features, skin smears and histopathology of all patients ≤ 18 years of age diagnosed with leprosy were retrieved from case records. The diagnosis of leprosy and classification to paucibacillary (PB) and multibacillary (MB) forms was done according to WHO guidelines and further subdivided as per Ridley-Jopling classification.

Results: During the study period there were 562 new cases of leprosy, of which 27(4.8%) were ≤ 18 years of age, with a male:female ratio of 5:3. The age at diagnosis ranged from 4 to 17 years (median: 12 years). Among the 27 cases, 10 were PB and 17 were MB cases. Twenty-four patients(88.8%) presented with skin patches, of which 8(29.6%) had >5 patches. Among the 3 patients who did not have skin patches 2 presented with ENLs and one was pure neuritic Hansen disease. As per Ridley Jopling Classification, most children (51.8%) presented with Borderline tuberculoid type. Seven(25.9%) had type 1 lepra reaction and 6(22.2%) had type 2 lepra reaction. Skin smears was positive in 9(33.3%) children (range 1+ to 4.5+). Positive contact history was documented in 5(18.5%).

Conclusions: The high percentage of MB cases and skin smear positivity in our study indicates the problem of undetected childhood leprosy and the need to continue leprosy control activities vigorously to reduce the disease burden.

