



TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

## **RISING NUMBER OF CASES OF CHILDHOOD LEPROSY : TIME FOR INTROSPECTION!**

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**Introduction:** Leprosy is one of the serious public-health problems in India, leading to a significant deterioration in the quality of life. According to National Leprosy Elimination Program (March 2012), approximately 0.13 million cases of leprosy were detected, of which, 9.7% belonged to pediatric age group. Proportion of childhood leprosy can be considered to be a performance indicator of the programs.

**Objectives:** Aim of the undertaken study was to evaluate clinical, epidemiological, bacteriological and histopathological characteristics of pediatric leprosy cases in community.

**Materials and methods:** It was an institution-based, retrospective, analytical study. All consenting patients (2-16 yrs) were examined. Relevant history was taken, clinical examination was done and laboratory investigations were carried out. Statistical package Medcalc V.12 was used for analysing the data.

**Results:** We found 32 pediatric cases of leprosy, over 4 years. Mean age of presentation was  $10.35 \pm 2.76$  years (range 2.5 years to 14 years). Mean duration of symptoms was 9 months. 25 cases (78%) were multibacillary. 3 cases of pure neuritic leprosy were found. Grade 2 deformity was noted in 4 cases (12.5%). On histopathology, 26 cases (81.25%) were borderline tuberculoid, 3 cases (9.375%) were borderline lepromatous, 2 cases (6.25%) were lepromatous leprosy and 1 case (3.125%) was indeterminate. Facial involvement was seen in 10 cases (31.25%), of which, 9 were borderline tuberculoid and 1 was indeterminate. Six children had a history of contact. 15% of MB cases were slit skin smear positive.

**Conclusion:** Most striking observation in our study was the high percentage of multibacillary cases, indicating high rate of recent active transmission from close contacts, thus questioning the effectiveness of leprosy control programs. We need to do a serious introspection and evaluation of the leprosy control programs and improve the clinical acumen in diagnosing childhood leprosy cases.

