HUMANITARIAN DERMATOLOGY/MIGRANT HEALTH

EXTENDING DERMATOLOGICAL SERVICES IN DIFFICULT TERRAIN

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Background: Skin diseases are among 5 to 10 most common cause of morbidity in Nepal. The prevalence is very high (25 %) with a very large impact on the quality of life. There are only 170 dermatologists, for a population of more than 26 million. The general practitioners and health workers who provide health care in the primary health care centres of rural and remote Nepal are not trained adequately to treat skin diseases.

Objective: To provide dermatological care to the populations living in rural and remote Nepal with difficult terrain.

Methodology: The interventions to provide skin care consisted in, development of a dermatology atlas – Skin Disease Primary Health Care Manual (SD-PHC manual) and Dermatological Care in Rural Nepal (DCRN) App. The manual is for the health workers working in primary health care centres to assist them in the diagnosis and treatment of the most common skin diseases. The manual was validated in a 2 day training of the health workers. The app is for dermatologists and general practitioners to provide dermatological consultation to the patients at the primary health centres. The general practitioner in a primary health centre examines the patient and provides images and information of the skin problem to a dermatologist in Kathmandu, who formulates diagnosis and treatment, and sends them to the general practitioner, using the app. The general practitioner provides treatment to the patient, as adviced by the dermatologist.

Results and conclusions: The health burden due to skin diseases is significant in Nepal. SD-PHC manual is illustrative, user friendly and adequate for health workers to treat the most common skin problems. DCRN app is a valid, feasible, cost effective and innovative way of providing skin care to the populations in areas with difficult terrain.