

Japanese encephalitis has been raging for four decades in UP

Researchers of central and eastern UP meticulously and laboriously analyse data of the widely prevalent disease-affecting mainly children.^[1] Our colleagues present us 15 years' data of the State in tables and diagrams so as to make their point in simple and transparent terms. We applaud them for their mammoth effort to dissect and mine medical records of close to 50,000 patients and then draw several easy-to-understand conclusions from the pile.

Nevertheless, the data project a picture that the epidemic is raging in the region for somewhat 15 years. All the figures cast an impression that for less than two decades, children of the geography are in the grip of brain fever. Here, what we want to add is that local people's representative are raising the issue of the encephalitis for more than two decades on record – way longer than data analysed in the study.^[2] Second, UP lags in completeness of death registration of its population due to several factors. Researchers analysed official records and state that last year less than half of (44.2%) deaths were registered in 2015.^[3] Moreover, the disease of the present study affects mainly the illiterate, the poor, the marginalized, the downtrodden, the underdog, dalits and adivasis; as a group they have lesser access to civil amenities than their counterparts. Therefore, data analysed by the researchers in the present study have their own limitations.

When a poor falls ill in our hinterlands, access to tertiary care facilities and Medical Colleges is a distant dream for them. Even when their illness is severe, case fatality rate and possibility of complications are high; the poor face several visible and invisible challenges to reach the centres of excellence. Therefore, data generated at official sites and then compiled may have gaps which may produce an incomplete picture of the microbe.

Third, in their analysis, the authors of the present study cite WHO publication of Roop Kumari and Pyare L Joshi. We explored the citation and discovered that in their review they state the scale of the scourge since 1978.^[4] If authors here analysed the data for last 15 years, that may be due to its easy accessibility and operability as that is available on digital platform. When issue of interoperability of the systems is

resolved, we would expect several new interpretation and conclusion of the digital record.

Lancet published informative news under a header of Newsdesk in 2005.^[5] There they report the status of the encephalitis outbreak (then) for three decades. Therefore, we need to connect the dots backward, look farther back in the past so as to see more clearly in future. Only then, we can devise the best strategies to have an upper hand on, and beat the germ in the game. History teaches us our follies and those who learn its lessons well go on to become masters! The researchers do the hard work of data analysis of the epidemic; which maims, paralyzes, incapacitates, and sometimes kills children. But here we would find data of only last 15 years. We are curious to discover similar analysis of the data of previous 25 years' duration – since the beginning of the epidemic as then a fuller picture will emerge so that we can assess effects of various strategies deployed in controlling efforts.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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We accessed all the webpages at the time of submission of this manuscript.

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