

Rising trends of herpes simplex virus - 1: A global public health concern

Sir,

The herpes simplex virus (HSV) has been categorized into HSV-1 and HSV-2.^[1] Regardless of the limitation to have a precise estimate of the caseload, the infectious disease is globally prevalent.^[1] The available global estimates suggest that more than 3.6 billion people (<50 years of age) have been diagnosed with HSV-1 infection worldwide.^[1,2]

Considering the risk that herpes infections are transmissible even during asymptomatic stages, it becomes the responsibility of the health sector to strengthen the surveillance activities to obtain the actual caseload of the disease.^[1-3] Furthermore, the sequels of HSV-1 are detrimental, as the condition is painful, hampers the quality of life, and aggravates the problem of stigma/psychological distress in the infected persons.^[1-3]

Moreover, evidence of the emergence of resistance against acyclovir and its derivatives have been reported.^[4,5] The rate of resistance has been quite less among immunocompetent individuals, as the duration of the treatment is short.^[4,5] On the other hand, among immunocompromised patients, the incidence of antiviral resistance is alarmingly high, owing to the prolonged duration of therapy.^[4,5] The presence of all the above factors makes HSV infection as a major public health concern, and thus makes it the responsibility of the concerned stakeholders to create awareness about the disease and enhance health-seeking behavior.^[1-5]

Considering the caseload of the infection, global presence, predilection to infect persons from all socioeconomic strata, and with no curative option available, giving more attention towards the strengthening of the preventive domains of the disease remains a key area

in ensuring a decline in the incidence of the disease.^[1-4] Further, the promotion of appropriate use of effective drugs will play a significant role in reducing the risk of transmission, as well as ensuring wellbeing.^[1,2] In addition, the World Health Organization advocates for the expedition of the research activities to promote the development of HSV vaccines.^[1,3]

In conclusion, herpes infection remains a major public health concern and owing to the different challenges associated with its prevention or management front; it is high time that the stakeholders prioritize the issue of prevention of the disease.

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