

Significance of School Health Nurse in Screening School Children in Islamabad Pakistan

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Abstract

Objective: This study was planned to determine what role nurses can perform in health screening of school children and what is their importance in identifying common ailments in school children. **Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted between December 2014 to Jan 2015. Data was collected by using structure questionnaire after pilot testing. Head to toe screening of children was done by trained nurses and data was analyzed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22. Percentages and frequencies were calculated for various ailments found in school children. **Results:** In total 367 school children were screened. Mean age of the participants' was 13.56 ± 1.9 years respectively. Out of 367 students, 154 were male and 213 were females. The common ailments found after thorough screening includes, malnourishment (14.2%), dental carries (20.4%), diarrhea (2.2%), vision problem (1.1%) and deviated nasal septum was (2.2%). Results were presented by using figure and table. **Conclusion:** School nurses can play a significant role in identification and management of common school ailments by timely performing health screening. School health nurses can also become a fundamental part for health promotion by promoting healthy habits among children at school level. Adequate attention needs to be paid to implent school health nurses for better future health of community.

Keywords: nurses, common ailments, Screening School Children.

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INTRODUCTION

School is an environment for health-related work in which education and health professionals both play an important role. School signifies the second most prominent atmosphere where the child life after home [1-3]. School nurses play fundamental role in facilitating student's health and learning [2]. Their role as school health nurse is very diverse including normal child development, recommend preventive intervention, screening and Immunization against preventable disease [2-5]. Furthermore, school health nurses also provide immediate interventions for acute and chronic disease, wound and emergencies, infectious diseases, mental health, dental disease, and nutrition. The practice of healthcare professional working in school is way long back [3-6]. According to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) the impact of school health nurses on student's academic performance and aptitude to study is profound [4]. Many studies support the influence of school health nurse in child school absenteeism and learning capabilities is enormous.

Overall, the student's quality of life physically as well as mentally improved [5-7].

The definition of School health service is 'providing preventive care and discovery of social problem and health in school children and their succeeding management and surveillance'. Pakistan as the signatory country of Alma-Ata declaration 'Health for All by the Year 2000' given by WHO develop into the foundation of school health program. To accomplish the objectives given by WHO health professional were allotted. However the program deficient in the comprehensive approach, therefore this program was shelved. As per policies laid by National Health since 1990, Health Education play essential key to health deliverance system. Regrettably health education was closely defined as mass awareness [4-7].

In 2008, school health program was develop by Punjab Health Sector Reforms Program (PHSRP), to encourage screening student health, competence building of teachers and prepared school students as

'change agent' for community by broadcasting hygiene and health messages [9]. Apart from Punjab, how other provinces of Pakistan have achieved the objectives of school health promotion is unclear due to absence of viable mechanism. Although, National Commission for Human Development has commenced 17 districts School Health Program in Pakistan which is focus on screening children health (UNESCO, 2010) [6, 7, 9-11]. Furthermore, collaborative work of Pakistan Federal Ministry of Education and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) offers following programs: school health environment; school health education; school health services and school nutrition projects. The long term sustainability of these programs is doubtful because of donor funded agencies involvement consequently, Pakistan is still in the early years for promotion of school health program [10, 11].

A considerable literature reviles that little consideration has been rewarded to School health programs and to discover school's health nurse role in the perception of child health support activities, even less efforts are done in methodical documenting the current standing of school health promotion in Pakistan [10-14].

According to the Pakistan economic survey 2015-2016 (41) million children between 3-18 years are attending schools and not to forget 21% of the un-enrolled figure of children correspond to almost one-fourth of the population [10]. As a health care professional (public & private sector) this is our responsibility to prepare and implement school health program clinical in our curriculum involving all stake holders to make certain the sustainability of the program [10-16].

Purpose/ Aim

The aim of this study is to initiate a small step toward the school health program by conducting the school Health screening which includes personal and family physical condition history and physical examination is designed to evaluate the health status and potential risk of individual, and referred to health care setting. The purpose of this study was to screen the school students of Sultana Foundation School for prevailing school health problem and to refer the cases needed immediate action based on findings.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted from December 2014 to January 2015. The study was done in elementary schools of Sultana Foundation Islamabad Pakistan. The foundation is serving by providing quality education to the children of this region. The study population includes the boys and girls coming to school for their basic education. The student's up to eighth grade were included for data collection. Volunteers come for the learning from other institutions was excluded, and those who were studying in classes higher than eighths standards were also excluded and they were not considered for data collection. On a total 367 students including boys and girls were recruited for data collection and census method was done because the researcher included all the students' fulfilling the inclusion criteria. Data was collected by using an interviewed based questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to done health screening in a sequential manner. The questionnaire contained demographic information, and questions from detailed health history. Further more in this questionnaire steps were included to complete the health screening. All the systems were screened starting from head to toe. Before starting screening, pilot testing was done on 10 participants similar to the study population. The questions were modified according to the responses to make them understandable for the participants and data collectors. Data was collected by trained nurses who were experienced in health screening and physical examination. A group of nurses performed head to toe physical examination of male and female student's up to eighth standards. The data collectors start health screening from 9 am in the morning and finish it by 1:00 pm. Once the data was collected and health screening was completed on the all students (367), the data was cleaned and coded before entry. This data was entered and analyzed by using statistical package for social sciences 22 (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was applied to describe population. Frequencies and percentages were also calculated for different ailments. The ethical approval of the study was taken for the review boards of the concerned schools and permission was also taken from the heads of the different schools.

RESULTS

The Mean age and standard deviation of the participant was 13.56 ± 1.9 years respectively. A total of 367 students were screened 154 male and 213 females. The gender distribution of the participants is shown in Figure-1.

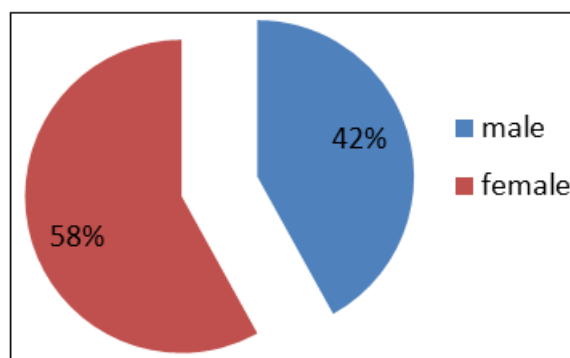


Fig-1: Gender Distribution of participants N=367

After completion of screening, data compilation and analysis it was found that 52 (14.2%) were malnourished. Out of 52 malnourished children 34 were male and 18 were female. Severity of

malnourishment was categorized into four further groups including severely thin, thin, overweight and obese. The distributions of these categories are given in Table-1.

Table-1: Categorical distribution of malnutrition

S #	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Severely thin	17	32.6
2	Thin	20	38.4
3	Overweight	9	17.3
4	Obese	6	11.5
Total		52	100 %

The other ailments identified after thorough screening included dental carries, tonalities. Diarrhea and constipation, vision problem, deviated nasal septum and earaches. Out of seventy five (20.4% of the total) who had dental carries. Dental carries was most prevalent in grade 6th and 7th students as compared to rest of the grades. The other finding of ailments constitutes 106 (28.6%) grade I-II tonsils. Out of total 8 (2.2%) had diarrhea, 17 (4.4%) suffering from constipation for last 5 days. Approximately 8 (2.2%) had vision problems, 4 (1.1%) were identified as deviated nasal septum and 8 (2.2%) had earache. Following school health screening, health care needs identified and prioritized such as malnutrition, dental carries, and nasal, ear and eye problems. Health teaching and awareness sessions were planned and conducted. Referral services were given to the children having serious health issues.

DISCUSSION

Ideally speaking school nurses play a fundamental role in enhancing school health environment. Other than enhancing safety of students, school nurses persuade students to develop and maintain healthy habits. In the current study school nurses identified various basic ailments including malnourishment, dental carries, physical abnormality including deviated nasal septum, earaches etc. By doing health screening and identifying these ailments school health nurses are playing their role. Studies found that health care professionals especially nurse are extending beyond traditional role and performing their role in community and schools [17, 18]. Additional studies reported that health care professional (nurses and

doctors) are delegated with additional tasks. These include referral and screening of different ailments, vaccination and arranging health session for awareness and putting efforts to improve physical environment of schools [19]. In Pakistan considering the fact that school nurses can have a significant impact too many questions arise that need to be answered. The very first question is do the health care professionals especially nurses are aware about their role in promotion of school health. There are several deficiencies in current educational system including lack of development of young nurses for health promotion especially in school setting. As we are talking about Pakistan, the concept of school health nurses is in its infancy. Lack of knowledge, skills and acceptance of the role required for efficient implementation of school health programs is a major challenge in school health promotion [20]. Additionally can we afford full time nurses who can work in school settings to promote school health ultimately doing health promotion? There is no doubt about the importance of school health nurses. In Pakistan we may learn from the experiences of western countries and a model can be adapted with the collaboration of different countries. Initiatives have been taken and the government of Punjab already started appointing the nutrition and school health supervisors at the level of basic health unit [7]. A mutual correspondence with school of private and public sector with health sector can become beneficial.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from this study that school health nurses identified several ailments through head to

toe screening and can promote health education by arranging several educational session based on students needs. It is also concluded that nurses can play a pivotal role in health promotion by timely implementing health promotion program in schools settings. By placing school health nurses it can open unique opportunities for nurses as well. However nurses need to understand their roles clearly. This could become sustainable by adding sufficient part of school health in nursing curricula's.

Conflict of Interest: None

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