

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES OF HEPATITIS PATIENTS IN INDIA-AGENDA FOR NHP, 2017



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BACKGROUND

People living with Chronic Viral Hepatitis in India is increasing and they face stigma, discrimination and impoverishment. The problem failed to attract appropriate attention of policy makers so far. Chronic nature of the disease has huge economic burden on the family. Studies on such vulnerabilities are not available in India.

Objectives-To assess psychosocial and economic vulnerabilities due to Chronic Viral Hepatitis among patients attending a tertiary care hospital in Delhi.

METHODS

A sample of 389 patients were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule at Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, New Delhi during October 2016-January 2017. The Becks' Depression Inventory II was used to assess the Grade of Depression. Treatment expenditure was also analysed. Pearson's chi square and logistic regressions techniques were also applied.

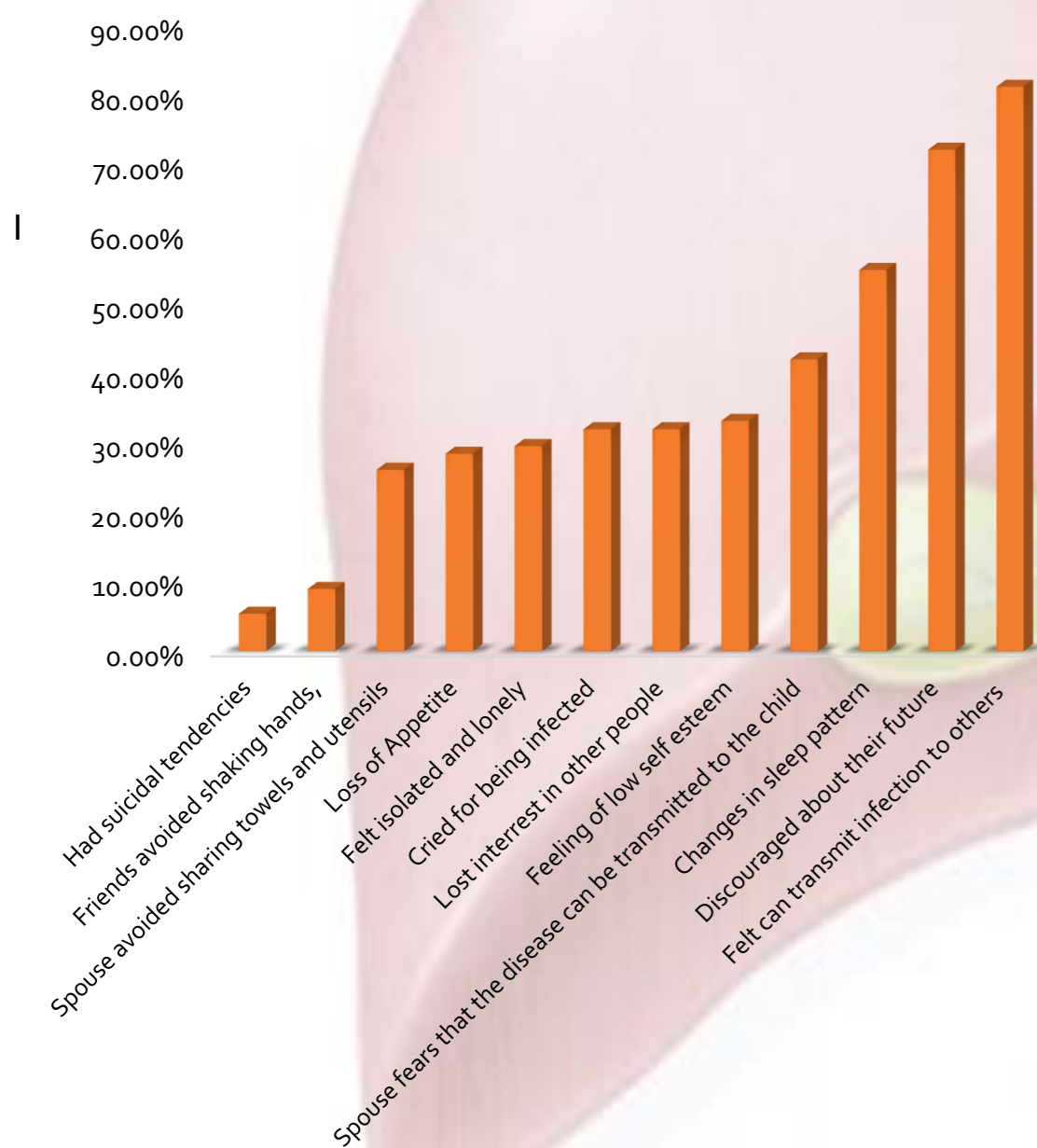
RESULTS

81% respondents felt that they can transmit the infection to others, 33.2% had feeling of low self-esteem,29.6% respondents felt isolated and lonely.9% respondents told that friends avoided shaking hands, 5.4% said that friends avoided them due to fear of contacting the disease, 26.2% said spouse avoided sharing towels and utensils,42% said spouse fears that the disease can be transmitted to the child. About 5.4% had Suicidal tendencies,72% were discouraged about their future,16% felt guilty,32% cried for being infected,54.8% had changes in sleep pattern, 32% lost interest in other people, 28.5% had loss of appetite and 41.4% lost weight, also.

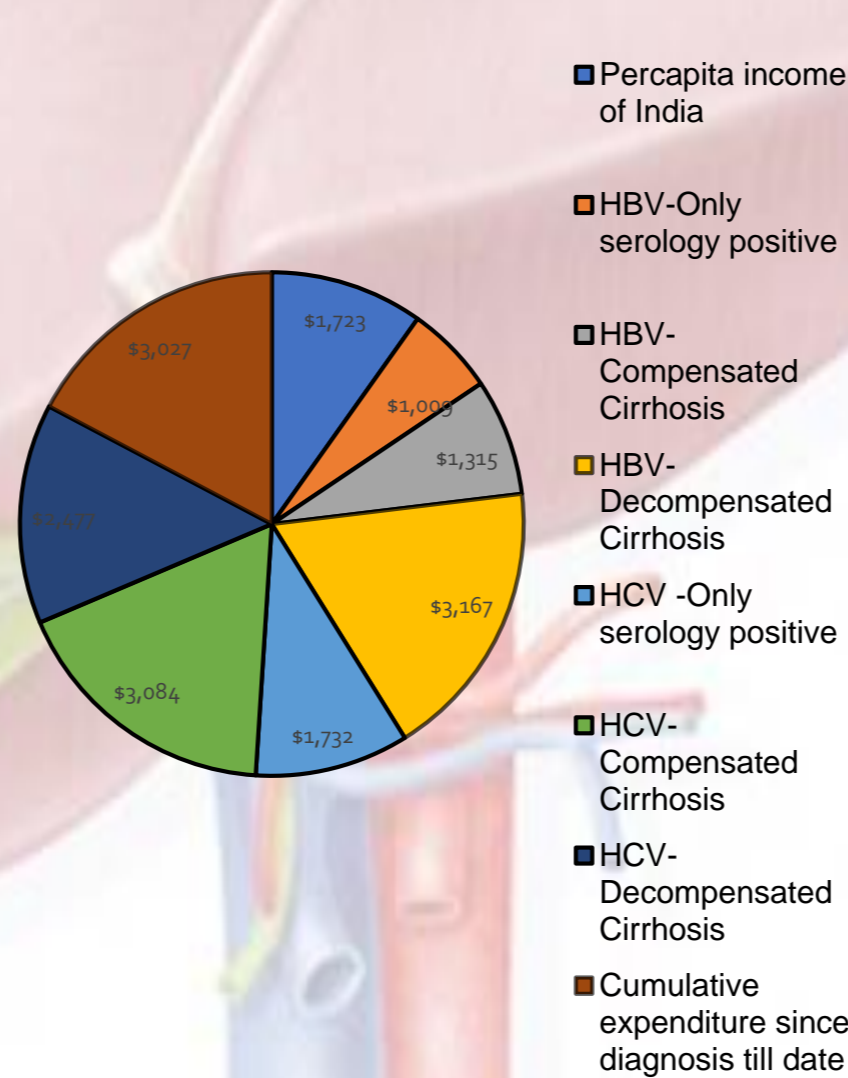
About 9% (8.7% males,11.6% females) had moderate depression and 1.3% (0.7% males, 3.5% females) had severe depression ($p < 0.05$). Significantly higher percentage of patients living in rural areas (33.4%) were depressed than those living in urban areas (14.3%). Counselling of patients in hospital was negligible and patients had to face discrimination in lower level hospital. Around 90% were financially affected due to the disease. At current exchange rate (1US\$= 64 INR), the median cost of treatment for HBV (Only serology positive) was \$1009, HBV (Compensated Cirrhosis) was \$1315 and HBV (Decompensated Cirrhosis) was \$3167 and HCV (Serology positive) was \$1732, HCV (Compensated Cirrhosis) was \$3084, HCV Decompensated Cirrhosis was \$2477 per year.

The median cumulative total expenditure since diagnosis till date is \$3027. The average cost of annual out door treatment was \$1138 and indoor cost of treatment was \$869 constituting 20.2% and 15.44% of family income respectively. Around one third (33%) of respondents spent more than 40% of their annual household income for treatment. Patients had to sell assets (19.3%), mortgage assets (21.3%), cut expenditure on food (15.2%), stop children going to school (3.1%), postpone marriages (2.8%) etc. which has led to impoverishment in the family (52.8%).

Stigma and Depression among respondents



Percapita income and Median expenditure



CONCLUSIONS

Hepatitis B/C patients continue to experience emotional disturbances, stigma and discrimination. The catastrophic expenditure on treatment of chronic Hepatitis B/C imposes considerable economic burden on the family. Evidence from our study contributes to better understanding of psychosocial consequences, stigma, discrimination and catastrophic expenditure. Our study justifies Government of India's decision to roll out free antiviral medicines for those infected with viral hepatitis

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None

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