

Educating Anganwadi Workers to Enhance the Mother's Knowledge and Awareness about Children Eye Health

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ABSTRACT

Background: Blindness, visual impairment, and other eye problems in children are some of India's major public health issues. In a state-operated integrated child development scheme (ICDS), the government engaged the Anganwadi workers and helpers. There is the advantage of integrating eye health within community health as active engagement of these local community workers spreads and also promotes an increase in the uptake of eye services.

Purpose: The study intended to train Anganwadi workers working within the ICDS with knowledge about children's eye health. The study also aimed to reach mothers or other primary caregivers of children and provide them with knowledge to increase awareness about children's eye health using the network of Anganwadi workers.

Methods: A questionnaire-based study was undertaken to assess the current knowledge and awareness about children's eye health among Anganwadi workers and in randomly selected mothers and primary caregivers of children from two blocks of the Saran District, Bihar, India. Comprehensive training has been provided to Anganwadi workers through a validated training module which follows the structure of ICDS training modules, and each participant is asked to share the knowledge and educate mothers or primary caregivers in their catchment area. After three months of imparted training, the mother's or primary caregivers' knowledge and awareness were assessed through a validated questionnaire, and the results were compared.

Results: A total of 274 Anganwadi workers participated in the interventional program, and 273 (99.6%) agreed that the training about "children's eye health" was helpful to them. Furthermore, 230 mothers participated in the study, and 222 (96.5%) said that they had increased knowledge and awareness about children's eye health from Anganwadi workers.

Conclusions: A significant improvement was found in the knowledge and awareness of mothers or primary caregivers about children's eye health as Anganwadi workers had educated them and made them aware of it. Educating Anganwadi workers has a positive impact on spreading awareness in rural areas.

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1. Introduction

Blindness, visual impairment, and other eye problems in children are amongst the most significant of India's public health issues. There is the advantage of integrating eye health within community health as active engagement of these local community workers spreads and also promotes an increase in the uptake of eye services, especially primary eye care services. In the geographical remote rural areas there is a win-win solution in the provision of services of primary eye care from the sustained and active involvement of community health workers like Anganwadi workers

(Manhas & Dogra, 2012). Anganwadi women belong to local communities, and they work as social change agents and mobilize community support so that young children, women, and girls can get better care (Manhas & Dogra 2012). Anganwadi workers also work as critical informants for identifying children having different eye problems. This method has been found very reliable and cheap. In a state-operated integrated child development scheme (ICDS), the government engaged the Anganwadi workers and helpers (Cherian *et al.*, 2019).

With regard to healthcare in children, it has been observed that the overall awareness of mothers is poor in

rural areas (Paranjpe *et al.*, 2016). Healthcare professionals like Anganwadi workers must be trained to disseminate appropriate infant healthcare information. Different communication tools need to be developed with method approaches and strategies that enable people from society and organizations, such as to improve the quality of life of people in a rural area; Anganwadi workers play a very active and vital role as they work as key informants for identifying children with different problems (Parkar, 2007) and educating the Anganwadi workers positively impacts spreading awareness in rural areas (Parkar, 2007; Nair *et al.*, 2009; Prabha *et al.*, 2016). Anganwadi workers also work as critical informants for identifying children having different with problems (Parkar, 2007).

There should be proper awareness of the eye health of children. The level of knowledge and awareness about ocular health in mothers needs to be reported. Useful information needs to be provided and informed to the parents about the different eye problems, and the Anganwadi workers need to be trained so that they may serve as a medium for this cause (Sg et al, 2018).

2. Methodology

This study was based upon a qualitative prospective study approach. Both primary research data collection and secondary research data collection were followed in this research. This research consisted of data collection using a

survey questionnaire. The study recruited subjects (Anganwadi workers and mothers or primary caregivers of children) from two blocks (Dighwara & Amnaour) of Saran District of Bihar, India. Pre-KAP (knowledge, awareness, practice) questionnaires and Post-KAP questionnaires for both Anganwadi workers and mothers, and a Training Module which follows the structure of ICDS training modules, have been developed and validated. Then, the Current knowledge and awareness about children's eye health among Anganwadi workers and randomly selected mothers/primary caregivers of children from 2 blocks of Saran District were assessed. Comprehensive training has been provided to Anganwadi workers through a validated training module, and each participant is asked to share the knowledge and educate mothers/primary caregivers of their catchment area. After three months of imparted training, the mother's/primary caregivers' knowledge and awareness were assessed through a validated questionnaire, and the results were compared.

3. Results

Out of 274 Anganwadi workers who participated in the interventional program, 273 (99.6%) agreed that the training about "children's eye health" was helpful to them. Out of 230 mothers who participated in the study, 222 (96.5%) mothers got knowledge and awareness about children's eye health from Anganwadi workers.

Table 1: Shows the improvement in both Anganwadi workers and mothers about the knowledge and awareness of various aspects/areas like children's eye disorders, preventable children's eye problems, food and vitamins for good eye health, and eye diseases that can cause blindness.

Variables	Anganwadi workers		Mothers/Primary caregivers	
	Pre (%age)	Post (%age)	Pre (%age)	Post (%age)
Knowledge about children eye disorders	23.0%	98.5%	19.5%	96.7%
Knowledge about symptoms of eye diseases in children	23.7%	98.2%	20.1%	92.0%
Knowledge about preventable children eye problem	24.5%	99.6%	22.8%	89.7%
Knowledge about the foods responsible for good eye health	65.0%	89.8%	48.5%	94.5%
Knowledge about important vitamins for good eye health	35.4%	99.6%	27.7%	94.0%
Eye diseases can cause blindness	28.1%	97.1%	22.0%	88.5%
Awareness about need of regular eye check-up for children	17.9%	97.8%	14.5%	91.4%

Significant improvement was found in the knowledge and awareness of both Anganwadi workers and mothers/primary caregivers about children's eye health, as Anganwadi workers had educated and made them aware. This study helped to design a training program for Anganwadi workers who got trained and, in turn, spread awareness in rural Bihar about eye health. Moreover, spreading awareness to parents or primary caregivers in the rural part of Bihar and providing knowledge about eye health may help reduce eye health issues and, eventually, the incidence of eye disease in the paediatric population of this area in India is also decreasing.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to educate mothers/primary caregivers about children's eye health as it is a major concern because of the long-term effect it has on the psychological and social growth of children (Wadhwani *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge and awareness among caregivers about the different preventive eye care measures that can contribute to childhood blindness (Sukati *et al.*, 2018). Studies show that the overall awareness among parents about health care in children is poor in rural areas (Paranjpe *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, educating Anganwadi workers about children's eye health will help in spreading knowledge and awareness among parents and positively affect the children's eye health in rural areas of our country (Parker, 2007). In this study, the knowledge regarding children's eye health was provided to both Anganwadi workers and mothers/primary caregivers. More than 98% of Anganwadi workers and 96% of mothers/primary caregivers showed improvement in knowledge about children's eye disorders such as the symptoms of eye diseases in children, about preventable eye problems in children, and awareness about the need for regular eye checkups in children after the intervention.

Conclusion

Educating Anganwadi workers has a positive impact on spreading awareness in rural Bihar. This study will explore the impact of the training programme on knowledge and awareness in Anganwadi workers about eye health in rural areas of India in the future. As the training has a positive outcome, it will be suggested to be included in the training modules for Anganwadi workers across India. Later on, it can be included in the ICDS training modules.

Data Availability Statement:

Raw data was collected from Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital, Saran, Bihar.

Competing Interests:

The authors declare that no competing interests exist

Ethics Declaration:

Ethical clearance number from the institutional ethical committee (IHEC/DHR/CU/PB/22/115)

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