

Childhood Cataract: A Socio-Clinical Study at a Public Sector Tertiary Eye Care Centre in India

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Abstract : Purpose: To study the demographic, sociological, gender and clinical profile of the children presented for childhood cataract at a public sector tertiary eye care centre in India. Methodology: The design of the study is retrospective, and hospital-based data is available with the Central Registration Department of the PGIMER, Chandigarh. The majority of the childhood cataract cases are being reported in this hospital, yet not each and every case of childhood cataract approaches PGI, Chandigarh. Nevertheless, this study is going to be pioneering research in India, covering five-year data of the childhood cataract patients who visited the Advanced Eye Centre, PGIMER, Chandigarh, from 1.1.2015 to 31.12.2019. The SPSS version 23 was used for all statistical calculations. Results: A Total of 354 children were presented for childhood cataract from 1.1.2015 to 31.12.2019. Out of 354 children, 248 (70%) were male, and 106 (30%) were female. In spite of 2 flagship programmes, namely the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) and Aayushman Bharat (PM JAY) for eradication of cataract, no children received any financial assistance from these two programmes. A whopping 99% of these children belong to the poor families. In most of these families, the mothers were house-wives and did not employ anywhere. These interim results will soon be conveyed to the Govt. of India so that a suitable mechanism can be evolved to address this pertinent issue. Further, the disproportionate ratio of male and female children in this study is an area of concern as we don't know whether the prevalence of childhood cataract is lower in female children or they are not being presented on time in the hospital by the families. Conclusion: The World Health Organization (WHO) has categorized Childhood blindness resulting from cataract as a priority area and urged all member countries to develop institutionalized mechanisms for its early detection, diagnosis and management. The childhood cataract is an emerging and major cause of preventable and avoidable childhood blindness, especially in low and middle-income countries. In the formative years, the children require a sound physical, mental and emotional state, and in the absence of either one of them, it can severely dent their future growth. The recent estimate suggests that India could suffer an economic loss of US\$12 billion (Rs. 88,000 Crores) due to blindness, and almost 35% of cases of blindness are preventable and avoidable if detected at an early age. Besides reporting these results to the policy makers, synchronized efforts are needed for early detection and management of avoidable causes of childhood blindness such as childhood cataract.

Keywords : childhood blindness, cataract, Who, Npcb

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