

Knowledge and Attitude towards Helicobacter pylori: Awareness about Health Impacts of H. pylori Gastric Ulcer and Its Carcinogenic Potential among Adults in Sharjah

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Abstract : H. pylori bacterium is a known underlying agent for gastritis, peptic ulcer disease, and gastric cancer and is believed to infect half of the world's population. Even with the ubiquity of H. pylori bacterium, there is lack of knowledge regarding its modes of transmission, associated diseases, carcinogenic effect and means of prevention; especially in the UAE. A cross sectional study of 500 participants, of which 58% (n= 289) of the respondents were female, and 42% (n=210) were male, was conducted in Sharjah to assess the knowledge, and explore the attitudes and practices among UAE residents towards Helicobacter Pylori and its associated PUD as well as its carcinogenic nature. A structured self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the target population to establish their demographic background and selected aspects of their lifestyle. General knowledge about H. Pylori was poor, only 24.6% stated they have heard of H. pylori. Attitudes towards prevention and practices were relatively poor as well. Subjects who suffered from severe symptoms (ALARM symptoms) had significantly lower habit scores than those with mild and moderate symptoms ($p=0.0078^{**}$). To the authours' knowledge, no previous studies were conducted in the United Arab Emirates regarding the epidemiology of the infection to detect the extent of H. Pylori's impact on the public health. The results of this study can be used to draw conclusions about the average knowledge of the UAE population regarding H. pylori. It can also be a starting point to devise new education programs and campaigns that raise awareness of this health issue which could be easily avoided with early diagnosis and antibiotic treatment.

Keywords : chronic gastritis, community health, gastric cancer, Helicobacter pylori, peptic ulcers

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