KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF PARENTS OF LEUKEMIC CHILDREN

MARYKUTTY PV*
RAYAROTH P**
SOUMYA S***

*Professor and Principal, PVS College of Nursing, Calicut, Kerala, India
**Principal, State Institute of Medical Education & Technology College of Nursing, Palakkad, Kerala, India
***Dept. of Medical Surgical Nursing, Koyili College of Nursing Kannur, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT
The study was aimed to assess the knowledge of parents of leukemic children about leukemia, knowledge of parents regarding care of children with leukemia and to identify practices of parents in caring leukemic children. It was conducted in leukemia ward of Institute of Maternal and Child Health, Calicut in 2007. The research approach used was descriptive approach. The investigators used questionnaire as tool and interview as technique for the study. The structured questionnaire was on demographic data, knowledge and practice of parents of leukemic children. Sample size was thirty and the collected data were analysed. The significant findings of the study were: Majority of parents 26 (86.6%) have average knowledge about leukemia. About 6.67% of parents have good knowledge about infection control. About 56.6% of parents have below average knowledge on prevention of bleeding. 53.3% have poor knowledge on management of chemotherapy. 56.6% have average knowledge about nutritious diet. About 13% of parents have good practice, 50% have average practice and 36.6% have poor practice. The study concluded that parents of children with leukemia lack significantly in knowledge and practice on various aspects of leukemia and its management. As parents are the primary caregivers, their knowledge regarding the disease and management affects the health status of the children.

KEY WORDS: Leukemia, Knowledge, Parents, Practice

BACKGROUND
Cancer has emerged out as a major health problem both in developed and developing countries. In many parts of the world, dramatic shifts in cancer occurrence are being noticed. Cancer in pediatric age group should require special attention, since they are the vulnerable group of our society and future of a nation.
Leukemia is a common childhood malignancy. It is a group of malignant disorders of the haemopoietic tissues characteristically associated with increased number of primitive white cells (blasts) in the bone marrow.\(^1\) In earlier times, there was only little awareness about
cancer. With advancement in medical education now it was found that, infection and inadequate care makes the condition more fatal.

According to Devita Vincent (1997) infection control in leukemia is important in many ways. It reduces risk of death and morbidity from infection. Essential elements include personal hygiene, avoidance of unhygienic food or places, use of face mask in public during severe neutropenia, strict hand washing by hospital personnel and isolation of patient. Roos N( 1992) conducted a study on the evidence of oral complication in adults treated for leukemia and found about 80% have oral complication. It is found oral cavity is the source of sepsis in patients with lower resistance due to severe bone marrow depression. Black JM (2005) mentioned that bleeding precaution such as avoid flossing and hard tooth brushes, avoid blowing and pricking the nose and straining bowel movements should be considered.  

Daly et al (1995) on his study on Nutrition and the cancer patient” found that cancer patients increased metabolic rate with advanced disease and diminished food intake cause malnutrition and weight loss. Martin A (1995) mentioned that adequate nutrition is necessary for recovery. Homemade food small frequent liquid food help to alleviate oral and esophageal mucositis that occur due to chemotherapy. The diagnosis of leukemia causes psychological trauma to parents. The mortality increases due to unfamiliar routines, lack of awareness and noncooperation in care giving process. Hence to alleviate these problems, nurses have a role to play. They are capable of providing knowledge regarding the disease, treatment and specific care required. Nursing care is aimed at education of parents about general supportive measures which should include prevention of infection and bleeding, personal hygiene, diet and management of side effects of chemotherapy.  

Lack of knowledge in caregivers contribute to many complications and side effects. Proper knowledge on care of leukemic children helps them to provide better care. Hence this study was undertaken with following objectives: to assess : to assess the knowledge os parents of leukemic children about leukemia, knowledge of parents regarding care of children with leukemia and to identify practices of parents in caring leukemic children.

**METHODS**

A descriptive research design was adopted in the present study. It was conducted in leukemia wards of Institute of Maternal and Child Health(IMCH), Calicut. Purposive sampling
technique was used and the total sample size was thirty. Tool used was questionnaire and structured interview as technique. 12 questions were asked to collect data on demographic proforma. A total of 22 questions to assess knowledge about disease condition, prevention of infection, prevention of bleeding, diet and side effects of chemotherapy and 46 items to assess the practice were used. Scoring on each subareas were arbitrarily classified as Good, average and below average/poor knowledge in each subareas. Overall practice scores were interpreted as good, average and poor practice. Content validity was established on submitting it to a panel of experts. According to this some modifications were done.

On obtaining permission from concerned authorities, data was collected from 30 parents of leukemic children with the help of the interview schedule. Verbal consent of participants were obtained and were interviewed. The investigators first established a rapport with the patient. The purpose of interview was explained and questions were asked one by one using questionnaire and responses were recorded carefully then and there.

RESULTS

30 % of samples are within age group of 20-25, 46.6% within 25-30, 20% between age 30-35 and 3.4% within 35-40 years. 83.3% of participants were females, 60% were Muslims and 73.3% have secondary education. 46.3% were housewives, 33.3% were coolie. 90 % have an income between 500-1000 per month. 50% of children were diagnosed as leukemia after 1 year of life.

About 26(86.6%) have average knowledge about the disease and 4 (13.4%) have below average knowledge.

About 2(6.66%) of parents have good knowledge, 16 (53.3%) have average knowledge and 12 (36.6%) have below average knowledge about infection control.

Majority 17 (56.6%) of parents have below average knowledge about bleeding and its prevention and also about having nutritious diet. Only 3(10%) have good knowledge about prevention of bleeding. About 6(20%) subjects have good knowledge and 7 (23.3%) have average knowledge about having nutritious diet.

A most 18 (60%) have below average knowledge and 10(33.3%) have average knowledge on side effects of chemotherapy.

Analysis of the practice of parents of leukemic children revealed that about 11 (36.6%) have poor practice and 15(50%) have average practice score and 4 (13.3%) have good practice score.
CONCLUSION
In developing countries like India, cancer is emerging out as major public health problem. Leukemia is the most common malignancy in childhood. The side effects are common with treatment modalities like chemotherapy, radiation and bone marrow transplantation. The severity of these side effects can be minimized, provided the parents are informed in advance about the problems through adequate guidance and teaching. This would help to increase longevity and to led a reasonably healthy life for leukemic children. Prevention of infection, bleeding, dietary management, good personal hygiene are the areas that require special attention.

The study concluded that majority of parents are not well aware of leukemia, its complications, management and prevention of complications. So it is essential to give health education to parents on these aspects. This will help them to provide better quality care to their children.

REFERENCES
1. Available from: www.tanta.edu.eg/ar/medicine1_ar/ internalmed/Leukaemia.ppt