Training primary health care workers to diagnose leprosy early

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Objectives of the training

• To increase awareness or knowledge of leprosy among primary care health workers
• To promote early diagnosis of leprosy and avoid disability and stigma
• To make leprosy care accessible to the majority of the population
• To make leprosy elimination program successful
Training methodology

• By making the health care worker familiar with suspicious symptoms of leprosy

• By teaching simple clinical examination skill to identify signs of leprosy

• By teaching to differentiate early leprosy lesions from other skin problems

Early symptoms of leprosy

Skin lesions can be the presenting symptom

– Duration of skin lesion should be asked
– Recurrence of skin lesion
– Symptoms associated with the skin lesion
– Color change in the lesion- (Hypopigmented or erythematous)
– Raised lesions without symptom
Early symptoms of leprosy

• Pain
  – Burning, tingling or non specific complaints

• Nasal blockage or stuffiness, epistaxis

Early signs of leprosy
Skin lesions are most early signs of leprosy
  – Examine the whole body in good natural light
  – Check for hypopigmented flat lesion
  – Check for loss of sensation on the hypopigmented lesion-using cotton whisp
    • Orient the patient
    • Make patient concentrate on the examination
    • Check sensation alternately on normal and lesional skin
Check loss of sensation

Early leprosy in a 4 year old child
Hypopigmented patch on buttock

A hypopigmented patch in an 8 year old child
Early signs of leprosy

- Raised lesions (Papules and nodules) could be the early signs of leprosy
- Swelling of the lower legs—lymphoedema
- Patient should be sent for slit skin smear examination for confirmation to higher health facility
…Early signs of leprosy

Nerve examination
- Enlarged nerve on neck
- Enlarged nerve on elbow
- Enlarged nerve behind knee
Nerve enlargement

• Enlarged cervical nerve

What is needed to diagnose leprosy?

• High index of suspicion in endemic country
• Reasonable history taking
• Thorough examination of the skin, nerves and extremities
• Important laboratory aid is needed
  – Slit skin smear (SSS)
Cardinal signs of Leprosy

1) Hypopigmented / erythematous patch with loss of sensation of skin
2) Clinical evidence of nerve damage manifested by loss of function or enlargement and / or tenderness of nerves
3) Demonstration of M.leprae in skin smear

At least one sign is needed to diagnose leprosy!

DOUBTFUL CASES- Refer

When to diagnose leprosy?

• Patch with loss of sensation
• Nerve enlargement
When to refer?

- Hypopigmented patch without loss of sensation
- Raised lesions (papules and nodules) without nerve enlargement

Lesions that resemble leprosy

- Lesion since birth
- Asymptomatic
- Reassurance is important