



Acts of FJK Foundation

Attitudes of Parents Teachers Association Members in Cameroon's North-West Region towards Students' Learning about Sickle Cell Disease

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Abstract

Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) are a significant component in the governance and management of academic institutions in Cameroon. There is a need to raise awareness of sickle cell disease among secondary school students. This study was conducted to determine PTA's attitude towards teaching SCD in schools. 209 PTA members from 4 secondary schools in two health districts in the North-West region were surveyed through a questionnaire following an awareness campaign. Over 90% of the respondents admitted they have heard of SCD, are interested in learning about the disease and want students to learn about the disease. Awareness of the disease is high but knowledge about it is low.

Keywords

Sickle Cell Disease, Parents Teachers Association, awareness, outreach, Cameroon

Introduction

In Cameroon's educational institutions the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a significant component in the governance and management of the academic institution. The PTA is body of teachers and parents of a particular institution whose general assembly meets once a year to discuss matters affecting the school, the quality of its curriculum, welfare and morals of student. In the PTA parents and teachers work together as immense contributors in educational, material, moral and health fare of the child or student (Mofar 2013).

If sickle cell disease control strategies must yield any significant results, there is a need to raise awareness about SCD, especially among students in secondary institutions (Olakunle, et al. 2013). The extent and knowledge of sickle cell disease among students is necessary in order to design appropriate educational programs (Desai and Serjeant 1976) on the subject. Most couples today are high school acquaintances. As such knowledge about sickle cell disease among youths could constitute an important variable that influences their premarital attitude and behavior. (Olakunle, et al. 2013) (Alao, Araoye and Ojabo 2009). Of the sickle cell control strategies, premarital genetic counselling is increasingly practiced in many countries (Alao, Araoye and Ojabo 2009) as lay people are not always sufficiently aware that SCD is a hereditary illness and cannot be

cured by traditional healers (Zounon, et al. 2012).

A general awareness of sickle cell disease has been noted in schools in Cameroon but knowledge about the disease is lacking (Neba 2014). This study was done to determine the PTA's perspective on, or attitude towards incorporating Sickle Cell Disease knowledge as part of the academic curriculum.

Method

A Survey of PTA member in 4 secondary schools in the Bamenda and Bafut health districts was conducted between January and February 2015 during the annual PTA meeting of the institutions. The survey was part of a general sickle cell disease awareness campaign program aimed at bringing awareness to PTA by the FJK Sickle Cell Foundation. The aim of the survey was to seek PTA opinion on sickle cell education in their schools and their awareness of the disease. A three member-team of the Foundation made a 15 minutes presentation on Sickle Cell Disease. The written survey was handed to members of the assembly following the presentation. Their answers were immediately collected and analyzed. There were 209 PTA members (men and women) from the four schools who participated in the survey. The survey design did not distinguish between male and female respondents, their age, ethnic background or

professionalism. There were six questions requiring “Yes” or “No” response.

1. Have you heard of sickle cell disease?
2. Do you know someone with sickle cell disease?
3. Are you interested in learning about sickle cell disease?
4. Do you know how someone gets the disease?
5. Should students learn about the disease?
6. Will you work for the Sickle Cell Foundation as a volunteer?

Results and Discussion

Survey results of the 209 participants are summarized in Figure 1. Some questions were left blank. The blank responses are indicated on the graph as “No Response”. Over 90% of the respondents have heard of SCD, expressed an interest in learning about the disease and want students to learn about the disease. 54 % of the respondents knew how the disease was contracted and 66% responded they knew someone with the disease. 50% of the population surveyed said they will work as volunteers for a sickle cell cause. There was no response from 4% of the population.

We observed that while there is general information about infectious diseases like STD/HIV but not SCD. Genetics is taught in the biological sciences that focus on gene transfers in plants and animals. These

courses can be adapted to include genetic disordered diseases. Awareness and knowledge of sickle cell disease status will allow affected persons make informed decisions.

Conclusion

There is general agreement among PTA members that knowledge of sickle cell disease should be included as part of the academic program. Awareness of sickle cell disease among PTA members is high but knowledge of the disease is low.

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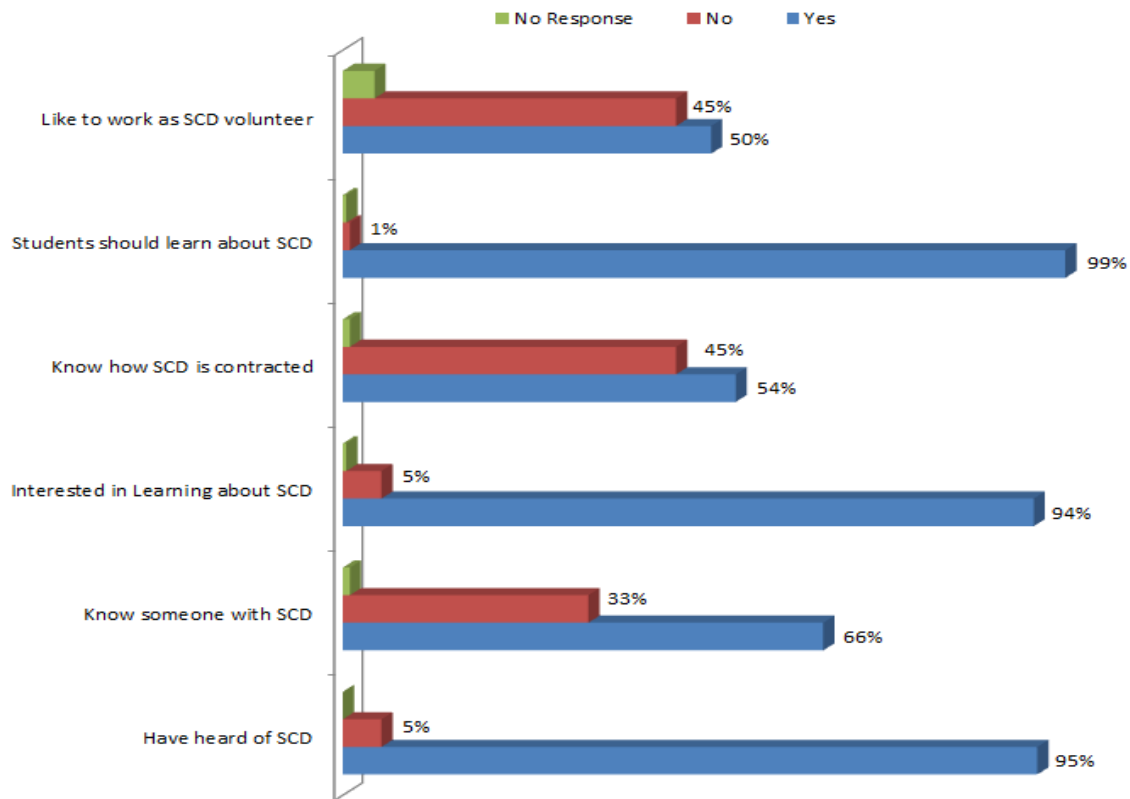


Figure 1: PTA Survey Responses