

Oral Abstracts

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EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SNAKEBITE IN BANGLADESH

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Objectives: Snakebite is an important public health hazard in Bangladesh. Recent countrywide epidemiological survey estimated an annual incidence of 623/100,000 and 6,041 deaths annually. But there is a problem of awareness among common public as evident by seeking care of traditional healers by a significant percentage of victims; and there is also lack of knowledge among health care personals as evident by inappropriate referral of patients to tertiary level hospitals without providing any treatment at primary or secondary level hospitals. Current govt. of Bangladesh has declared to build up a digital Bangladesh by implementing vision 2021. Most of the doctors and a large segment of public are using smart mobile phones and also internet facility is available all over the country even in the most remote and coastal areas. The objective of the study is to create social awareness; collective sharing of experiences and dissemination of evidence based standard management of snakebite among physicians and herpetologist through online social media (Facebook).

Learning Methods: A group of designated people studied different online forums with similar objectives addressing other health issues. An online discussion forum on different aspects of snake, snakebite management and public education was created. People were invited and encouraged to join and actively participate, share their experience and problems regarding snake and snakebite management.

Results: More than 2200 doctors, Herpetologists, media personals, online activists and common people have been added to a facebook group named "SNAKE BITE STUDY CLUB OF BANGLADESH" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/853651011398715/>) after its creation on 12 august 2015. Many of the members work in different institutions of Bangladesh and are actively involved in health care service. Through Facebook they share their experience and problems in snakebite management, can get recent updates. Group members working in primary health care settings can seek advice from experts working in tertiary level hospitals. They can also seek help from herpetologist group members to identify offending snake. The whole endeavor was based on voluntary participation and contribution basis.

Around 24 snakes have so far been identified by the expert group members on the basis of uploaded pictures on the group page. Around 20 members of the group who are working in the different hospitals of Bangladesh sought advice regarding management of more than 100 cases of snakebite. National guideline of snakebite management of Bangladesh is uploaded in the page, which has been shared more than 700 times.

Conclusion: People working at various levels and on different aspects of health problem (like snakebite) can be connected through Facebook group. This forum can be used to create public awareness and effective dissemination of knowledge among professionals and can also be a source of expert advice in individual case management. All these can be achieved with nil or minimal financial involvement. Social media can play a significant role in the management of snakebite, which ultimately reduces the casualty caused by snake bite.