

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in AEFI Surveillance Among Paediatricians

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Abstract

Introduction: To improve public confidence in vaccinations, the Indian government has sought to strengthen the Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) surveillance system since 2005. However, as in other South East Asian Region (SEAR) countries, the AEFI

reporting rates are currently low in India, and a key reason is understood to be the low participation of health care professionals. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practice in AEFI surveillance among paediatricians in the Indian state of Kerala, and to explore vaccine hesitancy, barriers to AEFI reporting, and mechanisms to improve reporting from the perspective of these paediatricians.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey using a standardised online questionnaire was conducted in a random sample of paediatricians selected from the membership of the Kerala branch of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (the main networking body for paediatricians in India). The survey questions were mainly close ended with multiple answer options, some open-ended questions and Likert scale questions. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and describe the data. Levels of understanding, attitudes or practices, expressed as scores, were compared across sub-groups of paediatricians (for example, government versus private doctors) using independent-samples t-test or ANOVA (if more than 2 categories were compared). Associations between background characteristics and levels of understanding, attitudes or reporting practices were assessed using Chi-square test. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results: Overall response rate was 64%- 243 of the 380 paediatricians contacted agreed to participate in the survey. Of the 243 respondents, 42% had formal training in AEFI surveillance. The understanding of 38% participants was rated as high, and the remaining had moderate or low levels of understanding (in equal proportions). Respondents who received formal AEFI training had higher understanding scores than those who had no formal training. Majority of the respondents in the study had positive attitudes towards AEFI surveillance (98%), and towards vaccinations (74%), but 40% of the respondents had negative attitudes towards the vaccination policies of the government.

Biography:

Anna R.Thomas, Physician Worked for several years in clinical paediatrics in India and Guyana before moving to public health. I hold a masters degree in International Child Health from University College London. During the last decade, I worked mainly in vaccine preventable disease surveillance and

immunisation programmes in India. Most recently, as Technical Specialist (Immunisation) for CARE India. Over the past year, I completed an executive masters degree in Vaccinology from the University of Siena, Italy. This study was undertaken to fulfil the thesis requirement of the course.

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