



Nipah Virus: A Threat for India at Present

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Abstract

The Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala state has created a menace in India recently. India faced the first outbreak in 2001 in Siliguri of West Bengal and the second outbreak in 2007 in the Nadia Districts. Total 71 cases were affected in the two outbreaks with a death of 50 affected persons. This indicates the high case fatality rate of the virus.

Keywords: Nipah virus; Fruit bats; Viral transmission

Introduction

This year the disease first started in Changaroth panchayat in Kozhikode district when a boy named Mohammad Sabith was detected with fever and neurological symptoms and died afterwards. Later, his elder brother and paternal aunt too showed the same symptoms to the illness, both were tested positive for the virus. On May 20, the results of the fluid and blood samples were tested positive for the virus in the department of virus research at the Manipal Academy of Higher Education which was seconded by the National Institute of Virology in Pune.

There were total 17 deaths occurred in the district and most of them were from the same family. All the cases were admitted to the Kozhikode District Hospital. This was a serious health crisis for the State, but according to the District and the State Health authority, the disease has been largely contained by this time.

The pathogen is a zoonotic pathogen as stated by the World Health Organization that is transmitted from animals to humans and seen for

the first time in Malaysia in 1998 in a village known as Kampung Sungai Nipah. The virus is considered to be transmitted by the Fruit Bats (*Pteropodidae pteropus*). Virus is considered to be transmitted from Pigs to humans.

Incubation period of the disease is 4 to 14 days which can extend upto 60 days. The symptoms are fever, headache, sore throat, vomiting, dizziness etc. Encephalitic symptoms are also common. Since no cure or vaccine is available till date to combat the disease, intensive supportive treatment is the only choice for treating severe respiratory or neurological complications.

As the Nipah virus outbreak was declared in the State of Kerala, the Health Department proceeded to upgrade the safety protocol at the Kozhikode Medical College where all the cases would be brought. All the Doctors and health staffs are instructed to use universal protective equipments to combat the viral transmissions from the patients. The Kozhikode panchayat, the epicentre of the disease was directed to spread the awareness campaign by the ASHA and AWW among the community regarding the modes of viral transmission. A team was sent from NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) and AIIMS to the affected area. Meanwhile those who reported with fever were admitted and isolated in the Hospital. The Kerala Govt is supplying Ribavirin for its antiviral activity [1-4].

Conclusion

At present there is no specific treatment available for the infection except giving intensive supportive therapy. People should be made aware to prevent direct contact with sick pig and bats. Consumption of fruits partially eaten by bats as well as raw date palm sap/toddy/juice in the endemic area should be prohibited. The health staffs should implement standard infection prevention and control measures while taking care of NIV infected patients to combat the spread of nosocomial infection. More advanced research is necessary regarding the ecology of the bats and virus to prevent such dreadful infection in future [3].

References

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