

Awareness of Various Thyroid Disorder in District Jhansi

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Abstracts

Hypothyroidism is a common endocrine disorder with a reported prevalence of 4%-10%. Previous studies have reported significant gaps in the basic knowledge about the condition in hypothyroid patients. It has also been observed that faulty practices prevail among these patients. There is paucity of data on the assessment of knowledge and practices among treated hypothyroid patients. The present study was aims to assess the knowledge, awareness and practices in treated hypothyroid patients. The current cross-sectional study was conducted on 244 consecutive hypothyroid patients, attending the Endocrinology Outpatient Department (OPD). The patients were asked to fill a structured questionnaire pertaining to knowledge and practices about various aspects of hypothyroidism. Only two-thirds of the participants correctly identified thyroid as a gland and 41% were aware that hypothyroidism is caused due to decreased function of the thyroid gland. The most common symptom attributed to hypothyroidism was weight gain (139 responses). Nearly 45% of the patients believed alternative forms of medicine can be used for treatment of hypothyroidism. It was believed by 42% of the patients that hypothyroidism runs in the family and about 10% believed it could be transferred to their spouses. Only 33% of the patients gave one hour gap between levothyroxine and food intake. The study demonstrates the lack of knowledge about basic aspects of hypothyroidism among the patients. In addition, there is a high prevalence of misconceptions and faulty practices. The study highlights the need for comprehensive patient education to improve therapeutic outcomes and compliance among hypothyroid patients.

Keywords: Drug compliance, Hypothyroidism, Patient education

Introduction

Hypothyroidism is one of the most common endocrine disorders in India with a prevalence ranging from 3.9% to 10.95%. It has been recognized that general awareness about hypothyroidism in India is poor and is associated with inadequate knowledge, wrong beliefs and practices in a significant proportion of patients. The lacunae observed about knowledge and practices amongst the hypothyroid patients have resulted in several misconceptions, poor compliance and suboptimal management.

One of the important factors contributing to this gap observed is the lack of qualified physicians for treating hypothyroidism in Jhansi District. Inadequate time spent by doctors for patient education is another contributing factor. Patient related factors include inadequate education, social beliefs and incorrect information acquired from the internet. Previous studies have consistently shown that knowledge, awareness

and practices in hypothyroidism patients are impaired. However, the previous studies from North Central India have evaluated smaller cohorts and have shown great deal of variation in the extent of impairment of knowledge and practices in hypothyroid patients. In addition, a comprehensive assessment on all the aspects of hypothyroidism was not considered in these studies. The present study was aimed to make a comprehensive assessment of gaps in the knowledge, faulty practices and misconceptions prevalent among a large cohort of hypothyroid patients District Jhansi U.P. North Central India.

Material and Methods

The study included primary hypothyroid patients with age more than 18 years, who were on treatment from at least last six months and were visiting the endocrinology OPD for the first time. Our study excluded patients who were newly diagnosed with hypothyroidism, who had a known secondary cause of hypothyroidism, history of neck irradiation, previous thyroid surgery, radio ablative therapy and who were incapable of answering or had a disease with significant mental retardation.

A structured questionnaire was prepared and used to assess data on the following:

1. Patient's knowledge of the disease.
2. Common beliefs and misconceptions associated with hypothyroidism.
3. Practices followed with regard to the methods of medication intake and patient follow up.

The questionnaire had a total of 26 questions covering the above-mentioned aspects. The data collection form was divided into two sets of questions, wherein the first set of 14 questions was used to assess the knowledge of patients regarding hypothyroidism and the second set of 12 questions was used to assess the practices followed by the hypothyroid patients with regard to medication.

Patients were asked to fill the questionnaire during their routine OPD visit M.L.B. Medical College Jhansi. For those patients who were not well versed in English, the questionnaire was read out in their own vernacular language and their responses to the questions were marked accordingly.

Statistical Analysis

The data was collected and tabulated using Microsoft Excel 2007 and was reported as mean, percentages and frequencies.

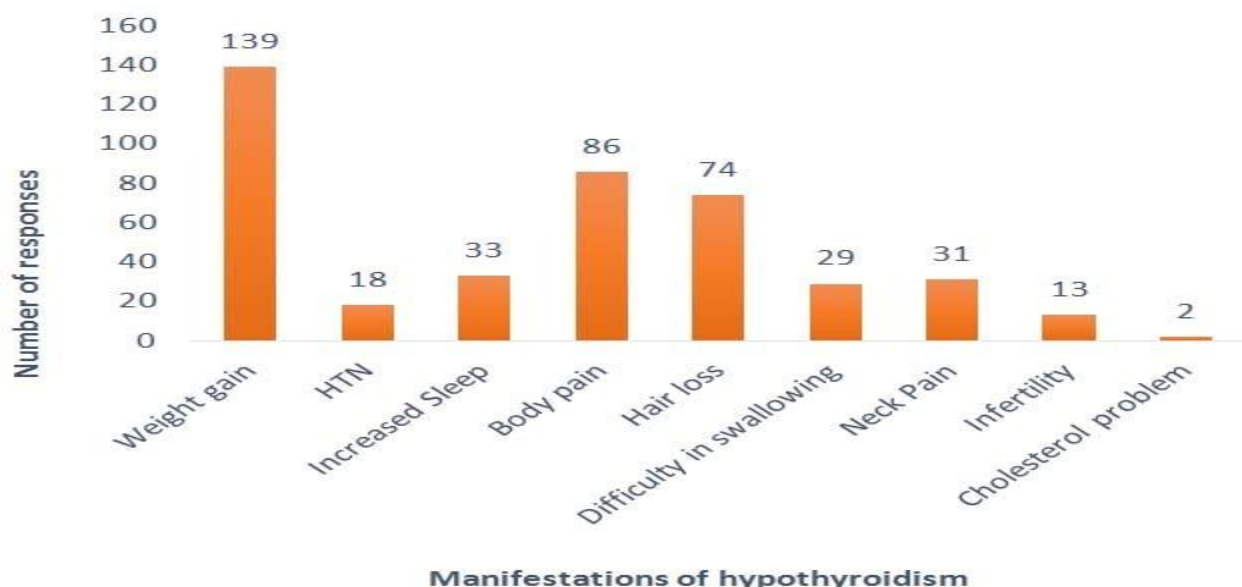
Results

The mean age of the study population was 36.6 ± 12.2 years. The male to female ratio was 1:4 (49 versus 195). The mean age of female patients was 36.79 ± 12.5 years and of male patients was 35.02 ± 12.1 years. The mean duration of hypothyroidism was 6.14 ± 14.3 years. The overall mean Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) was 6.1 ± 7.4 μ IU/ml. The study involved 76 patients (31.14%) who had attended primary school or less, 120 patients (49.18%) had attended secondary school and 48 patients (19.6%) were graduates.

In the present study, 161 patients (65.9%) had correctly identified the term 'thyroid' as a gland while 20.9% had misunderstood the term either as a swelling in the neck or as a disease involving neck. A total of 13.2% patients did not know the meaning of the term 'thyroid.' When asked about the location of thyroid gland in the body, 150 patients (61.4%) correctly knew that it is located in the neck, whereas 79 patients (32%) falsely thought it is present in the chest. While 5 patients (2.04%) thought it was located in the abdomen and 10 patients (4.09%) were totally unaware. When questioned about the facts of hypothyroidism, 100 patients (40.98%) were aware that hypothyroidism denotes decreased functioning of the thyroid gland, while 141 patients misunderstood hypothyroidism as either increased thyroid function (45 patients, 18.4%) or as swelling in the neck (99 patients, 40.6%).

When assessed about who could likely to get hypothyroidism, 95 patients (38.9%) thought obese people are more likely to get it, followed by 67 patients (27.4%) who thought elderly are more affected and 32 patients (13.11%) believed women get more affected with hypothyroidism. a total of 28 patients (11.4%) believed those with a previous family history of hypothyroidism are more affected, whereas only 22 patients (9.0%) were aware hypothyroidism could affect all age groups. The responses of the patients, when enquired about the effects of hypothyroidism on general health, are given in.

When assessed about the cause of hypothyroidism, 100 patients (40.98%) felt it was due to obesity, 94 patients (38.5%) attributed it to certain foods, 34 patients (13.9%) felt it is caused due to stress, wherein 10 patients (4.0%) thought it is a communicable disorder and six patients (2.45%) were unaware of the cause for the hypothyroidism.



Patient perceptions of different manifestations of hypothyroidism HTN-Hypertension

Conclusion

Our study highlights the high prevalence of inadequate knowledge, various misconceptions and faulty practices among hypothyroid patients. Our study also emphasizes the importance of spending adequate time for comprehensive education of the patients in order to bridge the gaps in patient care. The results also suggest that healthcare providers could provide the patients with information sheets explaining about the disease or to have a few pictorial/pamphlets about the truth and myths of the disease. These measures can advance their understanding of disease state, leading to value-added approach and superior outcomes.

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