

Training primary health care workers to diagnose leprosy early

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Objectives of the training

- To increase awareness or knowledge of leprosy among primary care health workers
- To promote early diagnosis of leprosy and avoid disability and stigma
- To make leprosy care accessible to the majority of the population
- To make leprosy elimination program successful



Training methodology

- By making the health care worker familiar with suspicious symptoms of leprosy
- By teaching simple clinical examination skill to identify signs of leprosy
- By teaching to differentiate early leprosy lesions from other skin problems



Early symptoms of leprosy

Skin lesions can be the presenting symptom

- Duration of skin lesion should be asked
- Recurrence of skin lesion
- Symptoms associated with the skin lesion
- Color change in the lesion-
(Hypopigmented or erythematous)
- Raised lesions without symptom



...Early symptoms of leprosy

- Pain
 - Burning, tingling or non specific complaints
- Nasal blockage or stuffiness, epistaxis



Early signs of leprosy

Skin lesions are most early signs of leprosy

- Examine the whole body in good natural light
- Check for hypopigmented flat lesion
- Check for loss of sensation on the hypopigmented lesion-using cotton whisp
 - Orient the patient
 - Make patient concentrate on the examination
 - Check sensation alternately on normal and lesional skin

Check loss of sensation



Early leprosy in a 4 year old child



Hypopigmented patch on buttock



A hypopigmented patch in an 8 year old child



Early signs of leprosy

- Raised lesions (Papules and nodules) could be the early signs of leprosy
- Swelling of the lower legs-lymphedema
- Patient should be sent for slit skin smear examination for confirmation to higher health facility





...Early signs of leprosy

Nerve examination

- Enlarged nerve on neck
- Enlarged nerve on elbow
- Enlarged nerve behind knee



Nerve enlargement



- Enlarged cervical nerve

What is needed to diagnose leprosy?

- High index of suspicion in endemic country
- Reasonable history taking
- Thorough examination of the skin, nerves and extremities
- Important laboratory aid is needed
 - Slit skin smear (SSS)



Cardinal signs of Leprosy

- 1) Hypopigmented / erythematous patch with loss of sensation of skin
- 2) Clinical evidence of nerve damage manifested by loss of function or enlargement and / or tenderness of nerves
- 3) Demonstration of *M.leprae* in skin smear

At least one sign is needed to diagnose leprosy!

DOUBTFUL CASES- Refer



When to diagnose leprosy?

- Patch with loss of sensation
- Nerve enlargement



When to refer?

- Hypopigmented patch without loss of sensation
- Raised lesions (papules and nodules) without nerve enlargement



Lesions that resemble leprosy



- Lesion since birth
- Asymptomatic
- Reassurance is important