

## Health Talk and Demonstration- an Effective Way of Communication among Rural Population

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### Introduction :

In modern world non-communicable diseases are on the rise, but in rural areas of developing world communicable diseases continue to remain major public health problems. Most of these infectious diseases are because of poor sanitation and poor hygienic practices. Diarrhoeal disease is a major public health problem in developing countries like India. Of all infectious disorders, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malaria were the leading causes of death worldwide during 2013.<sup>[1]</sup>

A third of the 2.5 billion people worldwide without access to improved sanitation live in India, two-thirds of the 1.1 billion practice open defecation and a quarter of the 1.5 million die annually from diarrhoeal diseases.<sup>[2]</sup> Diarrhoea is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among children under five worldwide.<sup>[2]</sup> In India alone, it was estimated that there were 212,000 child deaths due to diarrhoea in the year of 2012-13.<sup>[1]</sup>

Oral Rehydration therapy is a well established form of therapy for the treatment of dehydration attributed to diarrhoea.<sup>[3]</sup> WHO continued to recommend Oral Rehydration Salt (ORS) packets for all cases of diarrhoea.<sup>[4]</sup> Still in rural India, people have poor knowledge regarding importance of ORS in diarrhoea and its preparation. Illiteracy plays a major role behind it. Talking about the importance of proper personal hygiene for preventing illnesses and providing personal hygiene items may help some people.<sup>[5]</sup> To teach these people about importance of sanitation, to bring them out from their older unhygienic practices and give them knowledge on healthy practices is not a simple task. For communicating with people of rural areas we should apply a method which is simple in language and easy to be understood by them. Health talk, role play, street play and demonstration are few of such methods. By

these methods messages can be spread among community members in a simple way and in local language. Demonstration is a method in which people can understand message very easily simply by observation. People can even remember the message for longer period of time which they have observed as compared to the message which they heard. Doing demonstration of ORS preparation and giving health talk on its use in diarrhea plays a major role in improving knowledge. With this purpose a health talk and demonstration session was arranged in a rural village of central Gujarat.

### Aim of the Session

To create awareness on use of ORS during diarrhoea

### Objectives of the Session

- 1) To give health-talk on use of ORS during diarrhoea
- 2) To demonstrate how to prepare ORS solution

Primary Health Centre (PHC) Sokhada has been affiliated as Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC) with Community Medicine Department, Medical College Baroda since March 2013. Here interns are posted for one month training as a part of their compulsory rotatory internship posting. Along with routine OPD activities they also have to carry out field activities in different villages covered under RHTC Sokhada. Sokhada is a village with scattered clusters (faliya) having nearly 6000 population. Ramtekara is one of the clusters of Sokhada village where people reside in kuchha or semi-pakka houses and live in poor hygienic conditions. Most of them do not have toilets inside their house and practice open air defecation. Neither do they have clean drinking water supply nor do they have proper drainage system. Most of them are illiterate and have poor knowledge regarding hygienic practices, infectious diseases, their mode of transmission and their

treatment. This problem requires appropriate solution. Ramtekara, being a field practice area of Community Medicine Department, we conducted a session for improving their knowledge regarding health problems related to poor hygiene and on various diseases transmitted by feco-oral route. So, during "Intensified diarrhoea control fortnight", Lady Medical Officer of RHTC, Sokhada along with residents and interns students have given Health Talk and demonstrated ORS preparation to the rural community.

### **Preparation and Performance :**

"Intensified Diarrhoea Control Fortnight" was celebrated from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2015. As a part of its celebration Rural Health Training Centre staff of Sokhada has decided to give health talk to rural community. During these 15 days period, health talk was given at two different places in Sokhada village. In a Ramtekara faliya health talk was given by Lady Medical Officer and in a local school, it was given by Assistant Professor of RHTC Sokhada. During preparatory phase residents posted at RHTC along with interns visited whole village and selected this faliya near a temple, which was best suited for giving health talk. On August 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, whole RHTC team reached at predefined place in a Ramtekara Faliya. All the people residing in that faliya were informed on previous day by interns and ASHA worker and also on the day of performance again we had a small walk in that area to gather all the people. When 60-70 peoples were gathered, we started giving health talk. As health talk was organized as a part of Intensified Diarrhoea Control Fortnight, content of our health talk included causes of diarrhoea, its sign and symptoms, treatment and its preventive measures. As a part of preventive measures water hygiene, nutritional hygiene, personal hygiene and importance of sanitation were explained to them. Special focus was given on sanitation barrier and use of sanitary latrine.

After giving health talk related to diarrhoea, we explained them the role of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) in prevention of dehydration, the major cause of morbidity and mortality associated with diarrhoea. Along with that we showed them different homemade preparation which can also be used as a

supplement during dehydration. This was followed by one demonstration session of ORS preparation. Demonstration was carried out using their own utensils, so that they can measure 1 liter of water exactly using local utensils. Before preparing ORS solution 6 steps of hand washings were demonstrated to them. By this they came to know the importance of hand washing before preparing ORS or any other food. After preparing ORS, 1 teaspoon was given to each of them to taste it, so that they came to know about real taste of ORS when its concentration is as per requirement.

At the end of demonstration session, we checked peoples' understanding on the same. One by one we invited community members to repeat what they understand during whole session. One adolescent girl repeated all 6 steps of hand washing very well. One of the adult female representing whole groups again explained the importance of ORS in diarrhoea and sanitation.

### **Feedback from community members :**

At the end of health talk and demonstration sessions, we invited community members to give their feedback. One of the male members, quiet educated, one like a leader of that community gave positive feedback. He said that, "this kind of activity should be carried out at regular interval in their community as their knowledge regarding hygienic practices is very less". He also told us the reason behind not using ORS during diarrhoea, is their lack of knowledge in its preparation. One other person said that because of this even if packets of ORS are freely available from health centers, they keep it at home without using it. Children of that faliya get repeated infection because of poor nutritional and sanitary hygiene. The one who is leader of them constantly advised community members to build a toilet inside their house, but nobody paid attention. He also requested us to do a transect walk in their area to look at the real situation. So we divided ourselves in 4 groups and had a transect walk. Starting from the center, we went in four different directions and look out for situation of their "faliya" and their houses. Their houses were of kachcha type and merely few houses have toilet facility that too without proper water supply. We also realized that to understand the

problem of community members it is necessary to go in between them and listen to their problems and then find solution of it.

**Recommendations:**

Health talk and demonstration is an effective method to spread health messages in a community. It's a simple yet efficient way to make people understand difficult messages. In India where still so many people reside in villages, have poor knowledge regarding health and hygiene, activities like health talk, role-play and demonstration play a very important role in improving their knowledge on sanitation and communicable diseases. Such activities should be planned on regular intervals while celebrating international health days and weeks. It should be carried out in villages based on their needs after doing community survey or after a transect walk in the community.

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