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Prevention and Control of **RABIES**



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Introduction

Rabies is a deadly viral disease transmitted through the saliva of infected animals, affecting the central nervous system. It is caused by bullet shaped “Rhabdoviridae virus”.

Rabies affects all warm blooded animals. At least 11 species of domestic and 22 of wild animals can act as host/ reservoirs of the virus.

Transmission of Rabies

There are several ways in which Rabies can be transmitted:

1. By the bite of an infected animal
2. By a scratch, abrasion, or open wound coming in contact with infectious materials (saliva of infected animal)

By human to human contact (eg: a corneal transplant from an unknown infected individual)

Rabies in animals

Two distinct forms of the disease are observed in animals

1. Furious form : This form is characterized by hyperactivity, restlessness, hallucination, aimless wandering, abnormal eating habits, unusual bark and drooling of saliva.
2. Dumb form: This form usually involves convulsions, muscular incoordination, abnormal posture and gait, paralysis of the throat and jaw muscles often with excess salivation and inability to swallow, lethargy, prostration and coma. Death occurs in about 7-10 days.

Rabies in humans

The incubation period of Rabies is normally 2-12 weeks but can be as long as 2 years. The first symptoms is flu like which expands to slight or partial paralysis, cerebral dysfunction, anxiety, insomnia, confusion, abnormal behaviour, terror, hallucination, delirium. Production of large quantities of saliva and tears, inability to speak or swallow, hydrophobia during the later stages of the disease. Death almost invariably results in 2 to 10 days after the first symptoms.

Treatment of Rabies in man

1. Bite wounds should be immediately washed with soap and running water for at least 15 mins.
2. Disinfect the wound with alcohol or iodine solution.
3. Local administration of RIGs (Rabies immune globulin) around the site of bite and 5 doses of tissue culture vaccine including Human Diploid cell Rabies vaccine, administered in the arm on days 0, 3, 7, 14 and 28 after exposure.
4. The patients must also receive a shot of tetanus toxoid.



Prevention and control of Rabies

1. All pet dogs and cats should be vaccinated against Rabies and revaccinated in accordance.
2. Pet animals should never be allowed to mix with stray animals.
3. Avoid contact of livestock with wildlife.
4. Sterilization of stray animals.
5. Licensing of pet animals.
6. Wild animals should not be kept as pets.
7. Do not allow bats to live in the house.
8. Avoid picking up dead or abandoned animal or eat animals that do not look or act normal.
9. Prompt recognition and reporting of possible exposures to medical professionals and local public health authorities.