Management of life threatening reactions to food allergy in school aged children of Sharjah UAE

Hanan Sharif, Manzoor Ahmed, Nehad Gomaa
Pediatric Department, University Hospital Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

**Background:** Food allergy is a growing problem in the school aged children. It is a common cause of anaphylaxis[1], with an estimation of 1 in 25 children at school affected[2]. Surveys indicate that 16 to 18% of children with food allergy experience a reaction in school[3,4]. In UAE, 8% of children suffer from food allergy[5].

**Objective:** The objectives of this study was to look for School readiness to treat anaphylaxis to food allergy, how are they managed, and to identify any scope for further improvement.

**Method:** Data was collected retrospectively from schools in Sharjah. A validated questioner (on epinephrine administration) was distributed in English and Arabic to all Schools which was filled by the School clinic nurse /doctor for those children’s who encountered life threatening reactions to food and required epinephrine administration during 2013-2014. 33 out of 80 schools in Sharjah completed the epinephrine administration form. An official approval from Ministry of Education, Sharjah was obtained for this study.

**Results:** Eighty schools in emirate of Sharjah have been invited to participate in the survey 33 schools responded by filling up the questioner. The survey showed the following results:

- Number of the schools that have Epi pen available: 3 schools (9%).
- Number of the schools that have emergency response activated team: 3 schools (9%).
- Number of food allergy cases reported 14 cases; 2 cases were managed with Epi pen administration, and 12 cases were managed with antihistamines and transferred immediately to hospital as epi pens were not available.

Time required for treatment of the two cases treated with Epi pen was within 3 to 5 minutes, one given by the student and the other by the school doctor.

**Conclusion:** Our survey showed that Anaphylactic reaction in schools are not uncommon. Management of such cases need clear policies to recognize and treat allergic reactions and anaphylaxis. Epi pen availability, food allergy action plans and school nurse training and education are vital to ensure the safety of such children.

**References:**