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PREVALENCE OF ALLERGY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Introduction

Allergy is described as an exaggerated response from the body's immune system to harmless substances in the environment, leading to a hypersensitive reaction. The common symptoms include itching, rashes, hives, swelling, redness, nausea, vomiting, dyspnea, wheezing, cramps and fainting.

In less than 50 years, allergies, once considered uncommon, have emerged as a significant public health issue, currently affecting over 60 million people in Europe and likely nearing one billion globally. This situation is straining public health budgets. Alarmingly, the prevalence and effects of allergies are increasing, a trend linked to environmental and lifestyle changes driven by ongoing urbanization and globalization.

Allergies are an increasing health concern that significantly affects the daily lives of those who suffer from them, yet their effects on psychological well-being are not well understood. Even though allergies are quite common, they are often overlooked, misdiagnosed, and inadequately treated. Like many chronic conditions, there is a significant need for effective prevention, proper treatment, and timely diagnosis. This discussion will cover the causes, metabolism, various types, and clinical symptoms of allergies, while also highlighting the crucial role of healthcare professionals in managing and educating patients about their conditions.

Goal

The goal of this research is to determine the prevalence of various types of allergies among university students identify common allergens, to analyze the impact of allergies on students' academic performance, health related quality of life, to explore the demographic factors and prevalence of allergies, to access students' awareness of their allergies, to evaluate the students' knowledge and attitudes towards allergies and their treatment and to evaluate the accessibility and utilization of healthcare resources for allergy treatment among students.

Material and methods of research

The main material of this research was an online questionnaire developed with the help of Google Forms which comprised of questions on demographics, allergens, allergy history, the knowledge and training about allergies, awareness and diagnosis collected from 135 participants of university students above 18 years of age. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality.

The results of the research and their discussion

From the responses obtained, the majority were between the ages of 21–25 (77.9%), between ages 26–30 were 9.6%, and between 18-20 were 8.7% while the rest were above 30 (3.8%). Based on gender, 72.3% were female participants (99) and male participants were 26.98% (36). Majority were junior undergraduates which was 70% (95).

According to the responses obtained, 52% (70) suffer from allergies while 48% (30) did not possess any allergies.

Based on the survey, 51.6% (70) experienced mild allergic reactions, 40.6% (55) had moderate allergic reactions while 7.8% (11) experienced severe reactions to allergies. Majority of the participants 52.3% observed hives and rashes, 27.7% observed dyspnea, 16.9% observed swellings while others symptoms included cramping, sneezing, vomiting and stomach pain. 50% (68) of the responders obtains their medication such as EpiPen, antihistamines on prescription, 27.9% (38) relies on home remedies and 17.6% (24) obtain medication over the counter without prior medical consultation or prescription. However, it was observed that only 37.1% (50) will carry their medication with them while the rest 62.9% (85) will not carry any medication. The responses showed that 30.9% (42) of responders have allergies within the family histories.

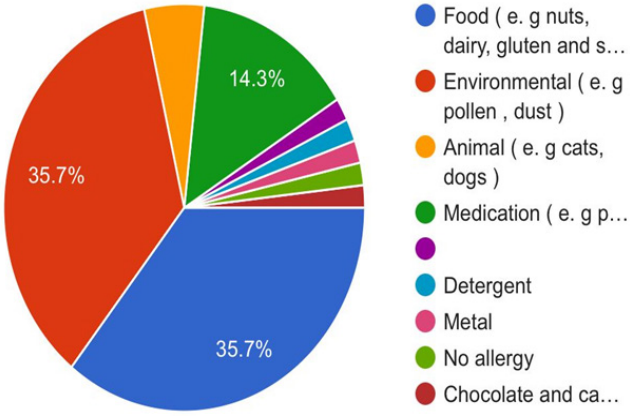

Figure 1 – If yes, please specify the type of allergy

Among participants who didn't possess allergies, majority 35.1% had only medium knowledge on allergies and its prevalence on a scale of 1-5 (1 min, 5 max). Lastly, it was understood that only 19.6% (26) had scientifically identified respective allergens through diagnostic methods such as skin prick test, intradermal test, blood tests for IgE etc. while the majority 80.4% (109) had not.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that while allergies impact some university students, the severity of the effects varies widely. Most participants reported a mild to moderate impact on their day-to-day activities and academic performance. Additionally, there is a need for extensive studies to bring promising new biotechnological innovations, such as biological agents, vaccines of modified allergen molecules and engineered components for allergy diagnosis, closer to clinical practice. Nonetheless, currently arising treatments, mainly in the fields of immunotherapy and biologicals, hold great promise for targeted and causal management of allergic conditions.

LITERATURE

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