

Is Diarrhea Endemic in Pakistan. Why it is Still Neglected? Time to Focus on Incidence and Mortality in Pakistan

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Editorial

We read with interest the report on effect of social isolation in dengue cases in Brazil [1] and would like to provide information on diarrhea cases in Pakistan. Diarrhea (three or more times loose or watery stools in a 24-hour period) is the world's eighth largest cause of illness and premature death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 1.7 billion cases of children diarrheal disease occur each year, accounting for 1.6 million deaths. Diarrhea-related mortality is prevalent in undeveloped countries due to inability to afford proper health care and inefficient diarrhea treatment. In addition to early death, diarrhea causes long-term malnutrition and impairment of cognitive development [2]. Since the epidemic was reported a couple of decades ago, diarrhea has been considered as one of the most notable health problems in Pakistan. The most common cause of diarrhea in children and infants is bacterial and viral enteric infections. Climate variability and floods have been linked to outbreaks of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Water-borne outbreaks of diarrheal disease following floods are considered to be caused mostly by water contamination. However, flood-related secondary effects such as crowding and consequent fecal-oral dispersion of gastrointestinal pathogens may also contribute to the spread of diarrheal disorders [3].

In Pakistan, the first epidemic of diarrhea was reported in 2005 from where it rapidly spread across the country. According to official numbers submitted to the province health department by numerous public sector hospitals, more than 31,687 deaths were reported in Pakistan due to diarrhea in 2016. Over 227,829 cases of severe diarrhea were recorded in Pakistan in 2021, and Sindh Province suffered the most in contrast to other regions [4]. According to the Sindh Health Department, 256,952 cases of diarrhea were registered in the last three months of 2022 [5]. Each year, about 53,300 people in Pakistan die as a result of diarrhea [6]. The numbers shown above demonstrate the severity of the challenge created by the diarrhea outbreak. Pakistan is one of the country's worst effected by global climate change. Nonetheless, effective diarrhea management and treatment measures are encouraging in Pakistan. Emergency and long-term preventative methods for vector and epidemiological controls until the final therapy is available. The use of zinc supplements in combination with low osmolality ORS helps to minimize the severity and duration of diarrhea [7]. But this is the time to focus on the hygiene conditions especially drinking water and treatment measures in under developed countries (Figure 1).

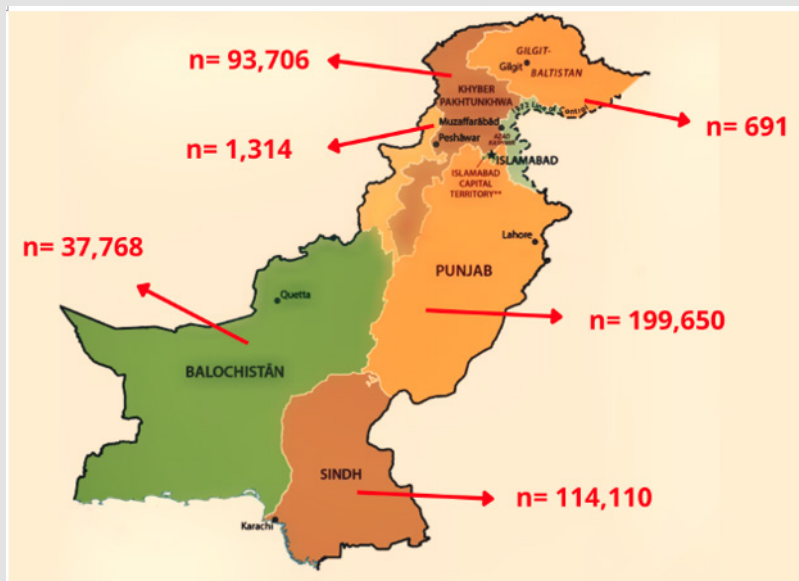


Figure 1: On average diarrhea cases in different regions of Pakistan during the period (2021-2022).

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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