

Scabies Emergence! A Critical Health Crisis Demands Immediate Action

Aakash Kumar, Areeba Jaffar, Kanza Mehmood

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Scabies, caused by *Sarcoptes scabiei* ectoparasites, is a skin infestation marked by itching and erythematous lesions. Recognized as a global public health issue, especially in crowded settings, it was added to the Neglected Tropical diseases list by the World Health Organization in 2017. The International Alliance for the Control of Scabies (IACS) provides diagnostic criteria, emphasizing definitive, clinical, and suspicious cases. Microscopic examination is key for a definitive diagnosis, while clinical and suspected cases rely on characteristic lesions and patient history.¹

Although scabies is commonly observed in children under 5 years of age, it can manifest at any age, showing no gender predominance. Predisposing factors such as overcrowding, poverty, poor hygiene, and multiple sexual partners contribute to the likelihood of scabies.²

The person suffering from scabies remains asymptomatic for up to 6 weeks, with an incubation period of 1 month before the outburst of pruritus. Reinfestation results in a severe hypersensitivity reaction and the burrows are surrounded by eosinophils, lymphocytes, and histocytes. In contrast, conventional scabies are characterized by intense itching, particularly at night or after a hot shower, accompanied by a papulovesicular erythematous rash. Crusted scabies, on the other hand, exhibit widespread scaling and crusting, often involving a large number of mites.³

During a medical camp in Maripur, Karachi, organized by Bahria University Health Sciences, we noted a high prevalence of scabies, underscoring the lack of awareness. Urgent community intervention is needed. To prevent scabies, seek prompt medical attention for symptoms, wash items in contact with confirmed cases at high temperatures, and

avoid sharing belongings, especially for crusted scabies.^{3,4}

Karachi is currently grappling with a critical situation as scabies outbreaks surge, echoing the challenges witnessed in the UK. The scarcity of available treatments intensifies the gravity of the situation. Notably, in Pakistan, the prevalence of scabies is estimated to be significantly higher at 38.15%, surpassing neighboring countries like India with a prevalence of 21.54% and Iran at 4.1%. This underscores the urgent need for heightened awareness, preventive measures, and collaborative efforts to address the pressing public health challenge in Karachi and across the country.^{4,5}

In summary, scabies poses a global public health threat, with urgent attention needed for its diagnosis and management. Predisposing factors contribute to its prevalence, influencing all age groups. The recent surge in Karachi reflects a critical situation akin to the UK, underscoring the urgent need for community intervention amidst treatment shortages. Heightened awareness and collaborative efforts are imperative to address this pressing public health challenge.

Authors Contributions:

Aakash Kumar: Idea Conception, proof reading, final approval

Areeba Jaffar: Write up and editing

Kanza Mehmood: Write-up

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Aakash Kumar
Final Year Student, MBBS
Bahria University Health Sciences, Campus Karachi
Email: akashladkani@gmail.com

Areeba Jaffar
Final Year Student, MBBS
Bahria University Health Sciences, Campus Karachi
Email: areebajaffar109@gmail.com

Kanza Mehmood
Final Year Student, MBBS
Bahria University Health Sciences, Campus Karachi
Email: kanzamhd999@gmail.com

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