

VERTIGO AS AN ENT DISEASE: GENERAL PHYSICIAN AND THE COMMON MAN'S PERCEPTIONSumit Chattopadhyay¹, Soumendu Guha², Shib Shankar Paul³, Souradeep Ray⁴**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

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ABSTRACT: BACKGROUND: To study consciousness amongst General Physicians and common people, on their perception of Vertigo related to ENT disease. **METHODS:** Study was conducted in two different places of Eastern India from 2006 to 2015. The patients with complaints of vertigo attending Otorhinolaryngologists at the first instance or by GP referral were studied. General Physicians also underwent a survey through a questionnaire. **RESULTS:** From the last 9 years of data, we find a definite increment in the number of vertigo patients at our OPD along with an increase in consciousness amongst the general physicians, though majority of doctors still don't think Vertigo to be predominantly an ENT disease.

KEYWORDS: Vertigo, ENT disease, GP - General Physicians, Spondylitis.

INTRODUCTION: Most of the vertigo are related to the internal ear.^[1] So it is best treated by Otolologists. Well, this is not always the scenario if we consider our General Physician friends as counterparts. A handful of them don't consider this primarily as an ENT disease. 'Spondylosis' or 'Spondylitis ' is thought to be the very common culprit for vertigo. In this study we have attempted to know whether a majority of them consider it as ENT disease, and, whether the perception is changing over time. Here we also studied whether common people think vertigo as predominantly an ENT disease or not.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The study was conducted in two areas and with duration of 9 years, from January 2006 to March 2015. The two areas were:-

1. M.G.M Medical College & L.S.K Hospital, Kishanganj, situated in Northern Bihar, India, where we have our Vertigo clinic 2 days in a week. This is a small underdeveloped township requiring vast improvement, particularly in the health sector.
2. North Kolkata, in West Bengal, India, which is attended by us once in a week (i.e. on Sunday). Being a metro city, this area is comparatively better developed.

We divided our study in two distinct groups. In the first group, we made a continuous study involving patients at our OPD (at M.G.M Medical College & L.S.K Hospital, Kishanganj). The second group of patients attended our private clinic in North Kolkata. Those who were attending our clinics were observed under following headings.

- a. How many of them are coming to us directly, i.e. either spontaneously by themselves (knowing well that ENT doctors deal with Vertigo) or being referred to us by another Patient.
- b. How many of them were referred to us by GPs.

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Another part of study was basically a survey involving GPs. It was conducted in 2 discrete phases i.e. 2006 December and 2015 February and March, both in Kolkata & Kishanganj.

To the GPs, we provided a simple questionnaire in the following format:-

Q. What do you think vertigo is mostly related to?

- a. Spondylitis/Spondylosis.
- b. ENT diseases.
- c. Neurological diseases.

Doctors were requested to choose only a single option out of the 3.

By GPs we mean to say General physician with MBBS degree. MD degree holders were not considered as GPs. Doctor's name was not mentioned on the questionnaire.

In 2006 December, we got input from 47 doctors in total, 23 from Kishanganj and 24 from North Kolkata. In 2015 February-March, we got answers from 73 doctors, 37 from Kishanganj and 36 from North Kolkata.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS: In 2006, from the answers of the doctors, we found SPONDYLITIS/ SPONDYLOSIS was implicated as the commonest cause. In Kishanganj, out of 23, Spondylitis got support of 16 GPs, Neurology got 6 and ENT got only 1. In Kolkata, Spondylitis got 12, neurology got 5 and ENT got 7 support. In 2015, picture changed a bit, Spondylitis still being the major. In Kishanganj, Spondylitis got 18, ENT got 11 and Neurology got 8 (Out of 37). In Kolkata, we got Spondylitis got 13, ENT got 14 and Neurology 9 (Total 36). So, in 2006 we find ENT got 4.3 % and 29.1% positive significance as a cause of vertigo in Kishanganj and Kolkata respectively. Whereas in 2015, ENT got 29.7% and 38.9% support respectively. So, we see a definite increase in GP perception about relation of vertigo with ENT in both the places of study.

The remarkable increase from 4.3% to 29.7% in Kishanganj probably reflects the awareness campaigns we used to organize at our Medical College once in a year. Unfortunately, in Kolkata, we couldn't organize such campaigns regularly at all. In the other group, we found that numbers of vertigo patients are definitely increasing at our OPD and at private clinics. It increased from 29 in 2006 to 103 in 2015 at North Kolkata private clinics and from 68 to 349 at our OPD (change from 2006 to 2015). In 2006, only 2 patients came directly to us at our clinic. In Hospital, it was only 6 in number. In 2015, numbers increased to 15 and 29 respectively. So, percentage wise, numbers of patients, who came directly to us, increased from 6.9% to 14.6% at our private clinics. But in our hospital, the numbers reduced from 8.8% to 8.3%. In Kishanganj, we think, we could not arise adequate awareness among common people regarding vertigo. GP referral was 9 (31%) and 38 (36.9%) in 2006 and 2015 respectively (At private clinic). In hospital, referral from GP was 15 (22%) and 96 (26.7%) respectively. You may wonder where we get our other vertigo patients from. It's from Internal Medicine consultants, Neurologist, Orthopedic surgeon, Ophthalmologists, etc.

In the hospital, in the last 9 years we have treated 1653 patients of vertigo in total. If we go by the chart, we see there is an encouraging increment in our patient pool. Our ENT unit now gets lots of referral from the specialists, patients and GPs.

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In our private clinic we are also now getting a better response. We have treated 515 patients in total, and from total annual case of 29 in 2006 it reached 103 in 2014 end.

Still, we feel that, being a reputed medical college with a super specialty facility, with an attendance of 250 plus patients at our OPD daily, the number of vertigo patients could have been more in Kishanganj MGM Medical college (At least in comparison to our private clinics). May be the patients of Metro cities are more vertigo conscious. But we are seeing clearly that majority of GP referrals still do not target us, the Otorhinolaryngologists. They send majority of their vertigo patients to other doctors like Orthopedicians and Neurologists. In 2015, from the GP referral survey we see, only 29-38 % GPs think it prudent to send their vertigo patients to us.

CONCLUSION: From the study we can conclude few things:-

1. The number of vertigo patients are definitely rising ^{[2][3]} both in rural and urban areas. We need to know that incidence is truly rising and awareness is growing up, so more patients are coming to doctors. If the absolute value of vertigo patients is really increasing, then what is the reason behind it? Has it any correlation with modern lifestyle.^{[4][5]}
2. The number of vertigo patients at our ENT OPD or chambers is increasing. This may be because of increasing awareness, but, we have still a long way to go.
3. The majority of General physicians still don't consider Vertigo as an ENT disease, though, consciousness amongst them is increasing.
4. Awareness campaigns are essential, which are to be organized at physician level and also at the doorstep of general people.

Another small data we want to disclose now is that in both areas of study more than 70 % of MBBS GPs were more than 50 years of age. Since it was a blindfold study, we don't know exactly how many of the patients were Spondylitis-prone referral wise, since it was an early teaching that Spondylitis causes vertigo.^[6] We think that legacy is still being maintained at least at GP level that cervical vertigo is the commonest cause of vertigo

We want to conclude with a personal experience. We have seen that many of our Otorhinolaryngologists don't treat vertigo that seriously. Only suggesting Prochlorperazine or Cinnarizine group of drugs to patients is not adequate. Vertigo has a multifaceted treatment protocol of which medicines contribute to a temporary relief from the symptoms. Surely, vertigo is not a simple disease and treatment success rate is never close to that of acute Tonsillitis (for example), but, it is a very debilitating disease at times. Bringing smile to such a patient is a huge reward for a doctor. At times vertigo requires proper Neuro-otological evaluation.

DISCLOSURE: Prior to submitting this paper for publication, approval of the ethical committee was duly obtained from the institution authority. This paper is original and it, or any part of it, has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. This paper has not been presented in any meeting. None of the authors has any conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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Etiology	MGM Medical College, Kishanganj 2006	Kolkata 2006	MGM Medical College, Kishanganj 2015	Kolkata 2015
Spondylitis	16	12	18	13
Neurology	6	5	8	9
ENT	1	7	11	14
TOTAL	23	24	37	36

Table 1: What GPs think causing their patients' Vertigo

Year	MGM Medical College, Kishanganj			North Kolkata		
	Total	Direct	Ref. By GPS	Total	Direct	Ref. By GPS
2006	68	6	15	29	2	9
2007	102	9	19	28	2	11
2008	88	11	18	32	6	11
2009	123	13	28	39	3	14
2010	167	15	35	44	9	19
2011	208	15	49	67	11	22
2012	275	22	68	79	11	26
2013	273	24	77	94	14	32
2014	349	29	96	103	15	38
Total	1653	144	405	515	73	172

Table 2: Patients presentation at ENT doctors with c/o Vertigo

AUTHORS:

1. Sumit Chattopadhyay
2. Soumendu Guha
3. Shib Shankar Paul
4. Souradeep Ray

PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

1. Associate Professor, Department of Otorhinolaryngology & Head Neck Surgery, M. G. M. Medical College & L. S. K. Hospital, Kishanganj, Bihar.
2. Professor, Department of Otorhinolaryngology & Head Neck Surgery, M. G. M. Medical College & L. S. K. Hospital, Kishanganj, Bihar.
3. Post Graduate Trainee, Department of Otorhinolaryngology & Head Neck Surgery, M. G. M. Medical College & L. S. K. Hospital, Kishanganj, Bihar.

4. Assistant Professor, Department of Otorhinolaryngology & Head Neck Surgery, R. G. Kar Medical College, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

NAME ADDRESS EMAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Dr. Shib Shankar Paul,
14F/1E, Dum Dum Road,
P. O. Ghughudanga,
Kolkata-700030,
West Bengal, India.
E-mail: dr.shibshankarpaul@gmail.com

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