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Letter to Editor

Eliminating Polio: Time to act for Pakistan

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Letter

Dear Editor;Through your esteemed platform, I wish to bring the public's attention to this urgent health issue in Pakistan. It is polio that affects the nation, caused by the poliovirus - an illness that can cause permanent disability but is definitely preventable[1]. This, particularly to children under the age of five, threatens a huge section of our children in the country. Polio, a life-threatening paralytic disease, spreads primarily through faecal-oral transmission and contact with contaminated sources. The virus targets the nervous system, leading to irreversible paralysis and, in some cases, death. Despite advances in medical science, there is no cure for polio; prevention through vaccination remains our strongest Défense. Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) and Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) are the two vaccines that have helped defeat this disease. Polio has been eliminated from many countries through these vaccines; however, it is still present in a very few countries, Pakistan being one of them[2].

The reasons are many. Widespread misinformation has led to vaccine hesitancy, fueled by conspiracy theories and distrust in public health initiatives. In some regions, religious misconceptions label the vaccine as harmful, while security concerns have hindered health workers from conducting vaccination drives effectively. This is further exacerbated by a lack of awareness among parents and communities, leaving millions of children vulnerable to the disease.We must act decisively. Public health campaigns need to counter misinformation with facts, using religious leaders, celebrities, and community figures to promote acceptance of vaccines[3-6]. Security for health workers needs to be prioritized, and the awareness programs should reach even the most remote areas, educating parents on the need for immunization. Polio is not merely a medical issue but something that reflects on our collective responsibility.Eradication of polio from Pakistan is achievable for all of us together along with the government, the media, and citizens' cooperation. Let's never let misinformation and negligence influence the future of our next generation[7].

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