INTRODUCTION

Poliomyelitis is a viral infectious disease transmitted mainly via the faecal-oral route. It mostly affects children under 5 years of age. This disease can only be prevented through inoculation. Poliovirus (WPV) transmission has never been interrupted. The misconception about polio vaccination can be removed through educating the masses.

The number of reported WPV cases bounced to 198 in 2011. It can be argued that geopolitical occurrences in the country, such as war and insecurity, in addition to the loss of masses confidence in the inoculation in certain parts, have continued to hamper elimination programs. False reports disseminated in Pakistan in 2011 that the US and its allies were operating spying nets and are trying to control the population growth through inoculation drives.

A number of deadly attacks in Dec 2012 and Feb 2013 spotting polio inoculation personnel in Pakistan have led to panic and uncertainty around inoculation initiatives and seem to have compromised the vaccine coverage in several areas. This continues to upset inoculation uptake and meticulous efforts have been made to involve local people and clerics to support the cause.

The main issues causing to the failure to disrupt virus transmission and the re-circulation of the virus were possibly cross-border transmission from Afghanistan, lack of proper knowledge and awareness, refusals of polio vaccination, pitiable pledge at the district level for polio alleviation, sub district coverage openings, low routine coverage, operational weaknesses in the quality of services and great numbers of children not vaccinated during National Immunization Days/Sub-National Immunization Days. This is a state of grave worry for the people as well as the officials because increasing number of new cases each year is registering. There are countries, which are now acknowledged completely polio free and are planning to stop OPV immunization, yet in Pakistan rather having a sharp reduction in fresh cases every year, the number of cases documented annually is rising.

This article attempts to provide the general perception of community about polio vaccination campaigns. Pakistan is among those three countries where polio is still endemic and new cases have been reported. The article critically examines the perception of people about this disease and the vaccination campaigns being initiated to eradicate this menace. The article also identifies the gaps in the existing mechanism.
METHODOLOGY

The study area was restricted to Tehsil Takht e Nasrati of Karak District and was conducted from 01st September 2012 to 28th February 2013. The study was conducted with an objective to find out opinion and response of the community people towards anti-polio campaigns. Interview schedule was designed in view of study objective for obtaining primary data from the respondents using likert scale. The research was conducted by selecting 40 respondents from the research area. Purposive sampling technique of non-probability was used for selecting the sample respondent. The sample respondents were head of the households in the target area. The research included only married males who were having children less than five years of age. Un-married males and those who were not having any less than five years old child were excluded from the study. Married women were also excluded due to socio-cultural barriers. Field work for the study was carried out by two professional Social Workers who were having Master degree in the subject of Social Work and the required expertise and knowledge about the subject matter. They went door to door for the collection of data. Before interviewing the respondents, the respondents were briefed about objectives, nature and scope of the study. Informed consent was taken from the respondents before interviewing them.

RESULTS

Table - I shows that out of total 40 respondents, majority of the respondents i.e. 34 (85%) were found familiar with the goals of polio vaccination campaigns and said that the sole goal of polio vaccination campaigns is to eradicate this disease while the remaining 6 (15%) answered negatively. Out of total 40 respondents, 34 (85%) respondents answered that they are extending full cooperation and support to the polio vaccination teams while the remaining 6 (15%) answered no to this question. The table further reveals that out of total 40 respondents, 28 (70%) respondents said that polio teams are well qualified and discharging duties efficiently, 7 (17.5%) answered in no while the remaining 5 (12.5%) answered in don't know. Out of total 40 respondents, 9 (22.5%) answered that polio vaccines are harmful and affecting the immune system of children while the remaining 31 (77.5%) answered that polio vaccines are neither harmful nor it affects the immune system of the children. Out of total 40 respondents, 7 (17.5%) respondents answered that polio vaccines are anti Islamic, 30 (75%) answered that polio vaccines are not anti Islamic while the remaining 3 (7.5%) were found unaware. The below table reveals that out of total 40 respondents, 3 (7.5%) were found aware about any Fatawa terming polio vaccines as anti Islamic while the remaining 37 (92.5%) were not aware about any Fatawa terming polio vaccines as anti Islamic. Furthermore, out of total 40 respondents, 30 (75%) said yes that community is keen to eliminate polio disease and considering it as serious problem, 3 (7.5%) respondents answered in no while the remaining 7 (17.5%) answered don’t know. Similarly out of total 40 respondents, 9 (22.5%) said that religious clerics are negatively propagating the polio vaccination campaigns while the remaining 31 (77.5%) answered that religious clerics are not negatively propagating the polio vaccination campaigns. Out of total 40 respondents, 33 (82.5%) respondents said that the polio vaccination helped in controlling the disease, 5 (12.5%) answered no while the remaining 2 (5%) were found unaware. Similarly out of total 40 respondents, 36 (90%) respondents answered that lack of knowledge misguides the masses about polio vaccination, 1 (2.5%) answered no while the remaining 3 (7.5%) answered don’t know. Out of total 40 respondents, 37 (92.5%) respondents answered that imparting awareness to the masses can help in promoting the cause of polio and can make the polio vaccination campaigns more effective.

TABLE – I: A QUESTIONNAIRE SHOWING THE FREQUENCY OF RESPOND.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Goal of Polio Vaccination Campaigns is to eradicate polio from society and not to control population barrier</td>
<td>34(85%)</td>
<td>6(15%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You are extending help and cooperation to polio teams</td>
<td>36(90%)</td>
<td>4(10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Polio teams are well qualified and performing duties efficiently</td>
<td>28(70%)</td>
<td>7(17.5%)</td>
<td>5(12.5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Polio vaccines are harmful and affect immune system of children</td>
<td>09(22.5%)</td>
<td>31(77.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Polio vaccines are against Islam</td>
<td>7(17.5%)</td>
<td>30(75%)</td>
<td>3(7.5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Know any Fatawa terming polio as anti Islamic</td>
<td>3(7.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37(92.5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community is keen to eliminate polio and is taking it a serious problem</td>
<td>30(75%)</td>
<td>3(7.5%)</td>
<td>7(17.5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Religious clerics are negatively propagating polio vaccination</td>
<td>9(22.5%)</td>
<td>31(77.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Polio vaccinations campaigns help in controlling the disease</td>
<td>33(82.5%)</td>
<td>5(12.5%)</td>
<td>2(5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge misguides the masses about polio vaccination</td>
<td>36(90%)</td>
<td>1(2.5%)</td>
<td>3(7.5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Awareness can promote the cause of polio and make the campaigns effective</td>
<td>37(92.5%)</td>
<td>1(2.5%)</td>
<td>2(5%)</td>
<td>40(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

Coverage of polio inoculation in Pakistan is extremely low. Such low coverage obviously answers the problem as why polio is still widespread and new cases are emerging. Over the years, countries account 80–100% coverage11,12. Elimination of Polio needs 100% coverage by complete doses but a huge segment of population is incompletely inoculated making them susceptible10.

Community response towards polio vaccination in our study was positive and people are keen to eliminate this disease. Goal of polio vaccination according to them is to eradicate this disease and not to control population growth. They reject that polio vaccination are administering to children in order to reduce their fertility. Polio vaccines affecting a person's capability to bear children is false and is just a rumor. Children have gotten polio drops when they were young and they've grown up normally, got wedded and had normal offsprings13. People are considering polio as a serious problem in Pakistan and are keen to eradicate this disease from the country14. Polio vaccines are neither harmful nor it affects the immune system of the children. The vaccine has been recommended by Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians15. Since the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was launched in 1988, the amount of polio cases has decreased by an over 99%. During the same time, the number of polio affected countries dropped from 125 to only 3. Zero case has been reported in the Western hemisphere in 2 decades and Europe was confirmed as polio free in 200216.

Health workers are efficiently performing their duties and working round the clock to eradicate this disease despite security hazards17. They are impartial, neutral and don’t hold up any political interests. Their only attention is children; no matter who they are or where they are18. Islam places on community prosperity and safety, especially for children, as the best guarantee of a better future for the Muslim community. Islam strongly advocates for children's rights and recognizes the right to life as supreme. From this perspective, to ensure the protection of life and health through the prevention of communicable diseases, including vaccine-preventable diseases, is a key value. Islam therefore strongly condemns whoever tries to prevent a child from accessing this basic right, including parents and community leaders19.

Top 22 Islamic scholars from around the globe have also signed an acknowledgement of the polio elimination initiatives, which firmly say that Islam doesn't in any way, form or mode prevent intake of the oral polio vaccine and that the oral polio vaccine being administered to the children is acknowledged by them and is completely harmless. They issued a call for all Muslims to cooperate with the immunization of Muslim children against polio. Maulana Sami ul Haq, head of an Islamic seminary issued a Fatwa urging parents to immunize their children against polio and other diseases20. Disinformation about polio vaccination is widely hindering the efforts of eradicating this disease. Such indoctrination orchestrates refusals on part of parents to vaccinate their children20. People are being guided wrongly regarding polio vaccination. The EPI personnel also reported dearth of awareness among people as the major barrier. Due to the insignificant role of media, people still trust in myths about vaccination21. Extra media coverage needs to be given to vaccination to enhance awareness. A study in India has revealed radio as the most common source of information during NIDs. As TV and radio is the most common source of information therefore, in order to amend the attitude of the communities about vaccination22.

CONCLUSION

Community people are taking polio vaccination positive. They are extending cooperation to the polio vaccination teams and are keen to eliminate this disease. The misconception about polio vaccination can be removed through educating the masses.

REFERENCES

12. Desai VP, Kowli SS, Chaturvedi RM, Sunder SS, Kumar RR, Bhalerao VR. Effectiveness of polio vaccination coverage in


16. Red Cross Red Crescent. The last drop: whipping polio off the face of the planet. 2013; issue 2.


