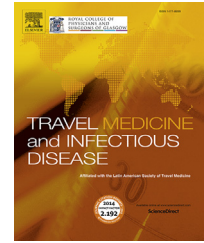




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Correspondence

The social determinants of polio in Pakistan



KEYWORDS

Poliomyelitis;
Communicable disease
control;
Pakistan

Dear Editor,

We read with great interest Mushtagh and colleagues' paper regarding polio in Pakistan [1]. While Pakistan was the sole country with an increasing number of wild poliovirus cases in 2014, Iran has been one of the Pakistan's neighbors in which polio has been eradicated since more than 15 years ago [2]. Therefore, the current obstacles should be more reviewed.

First of all, Reilly et al. reported decreased coverage of polio immunization in federally administered tribal areas and some other parts of Pakistan from 2006 through 2011 [3]. Moreover, there are some papers indicating social misconceptions against polio immunization in the country [4]. Hence, we agree with the authors so as to achieve the Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013–2018 in Pakistan, we should focus on the social determinants of health. We confirm that extremist groups may not be able to prevent health services such as polio vaccination too much without a social background.

Second, the World Health Organization urges Pakistan to implement its National Emergency Action Plan (NEAP) for polio. It seems that focusing on the communication strategies of the NEAP including dialogs with religious leaders, holding some individual meetings, seminars, workshops, campaigns, and media programs are necessary for eliminating such misconceptions, which can in turn contribute to raising public awareness about the urgency of the need for polio vaccination [5].

Furthermore, we believe that there are also other variables which would explain the failure of polio eradication in

Pakistan including the drinking water, the level of population immunity against polio, malnutrition, lack of a comprehensive health care system, low per capita expenditure on health, lack of safe and effective vaccines, and poor cold chain monitoring.

The onerous effort of Pakistani scientists to eradicate polio in their country is indeed promising.

Authors' contributions

1. Dr. Payman Salamati designed the idea, drafted the paper and approved the version to be published.

2. Dr. Seyed mansour Razavi designed the idea, revised the paper critically and approved the version to be published.

Conflict of interest statements

None.

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Ethics committee approval

The paper has been prepared in accordance with the rules of the ethical review board of Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

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