

**PP 27: Influence of preventive measures, awareness and attitudes regarding COVID 19 on the spread of respiratory infections among school children aged 15-19 years in the Western Province**

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**Introduction:** COVID 19 is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Since social distancing plays a major role in controlling the transmission, it is worthwhile to assess the influence of long-term practice of these preventive measures on the incidence of other respiratory infections.

**Objectives:** To determine the influence of protective measures, awareness and attitudes regarding COVID 19 on spread of Influenza like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections among school children aged 15-19 years in Western Province.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 387 participants via an online self-administered questionnaire. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics on SPSS software.

**Results:** A significant female predominance (71.6%) was observed. Majority of the study population had a good knowledge about COVID 19 (72%), ILI (59.4%) and preventive measures (60.2%). Majority (73.6%) were willing to get vaccinated for COVID 19 if its provided free while uncertainty about the effectiveness and side effects were the main reasons for the reluctance among the rest. Incidence of symptoms of ILI in 2020 was significantly less compared to 2019. Majority among females (58.5%) had good knowledge on COVID 19 when compared to males (39.1%) and this was statistically significant.

**Conclusions:** Majority of the participants had a good overall knowledge on COVID 19 and ILI. While majority were willing to take a vaccine for COVID 19. Incidence of symptoms of ILI in 2020 was significantly less compared to 2019. There is a statistically significant association between the gender and the knowledge on COVID 19 and ILI.

**Keywords:** Preventive measures, awareness, attitudes, COVID-19, school children