

Breaking the Final Barrier: Pakistan's Hurdles in Eradicating Polio

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Respected Editor,

Pakistan is still fighting to eradicate polio, which is a problem that needs to be addressed globally. Support and resources must be mobilized as we get closer to our objective of completely eradicating this debilitating condition. Support and resources must be mobilized to turn down the final obstacle that stands in the way of achieving this massive milestone.

Although polio is still endemic in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Dr. Ananda Bandyopadhyay, the deputy director of polio technology, research, and analytics at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, stressed that the virus is currently limited to a few isolated pockets within particular districts in these countries [1].

Concerns regarding a possible spike in polio infections have been rekindled following the discovery of the poliovirus in sewage water samples taken from 30 different districts in Pakistan. The recent discovery of two polio cases in Chaman and Dera Bugti highlighted Pakistan's difficulties in spite of strenuous efforts. Furthermore, the presence of the virus has been alarmingly demonstrated by the study of over 83 waste water samples gathered across 30 districts [2].

The issue is made worse by the large-scale mobility of vaccinated subpopulations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which encourages cross-border transmission. Numerous studies state that a large population of Afghan youngsters is not immunized, and Pakistan saw the WPV1 surges in 2023 that were common in Afghanistan in 2022. These results imply that there is still a chance for international spread and cross-border transmission [3].

The nationwide immunization initiatives are a crucial factor in eradication. Low immunization completion rates are strongly correlated with adverse socioeconomic variables, such as poverty, illiteracy, and difficulty accessing community health and immunization services. Pakistan's challenging topography, which includes the rugged terrain of Baluchistan in the south and the Himalayan mountain range and glaciers in the north, combines with all of these issues to make public health services inadequate [4].

According to a recent study conducted amongst the Front Line Workers (FLWs), four overarching themes emerged from the obstacles of polio eradication: addressing community fatigue, bolstering primary health care, community participation, and workplace issues [5].

In summary, cross-border transmission, low vaccination rates, and socioeconomic barriers compound eradication efforts. Priorities include addressing community fatigue, improving primary healthcare, engaging communities, and overcoming workplace obstacles.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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