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Public Awareness of Beta Thalassemia in Bahrain

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Background: Genetic diseases, especially hereditary blood disorders such as thalassemia syndromes impose a significant burden on many countries. Many educational programs have been implemented in Bahrain to increase public awareness of beta thalassemia and other hereditary blood disorders.

Objective: The aim of the study is to evaluate public awareness level about beta thalassemia.

Design: Cross sectional survey.

Setting: Public in Bahrain.

Method: Questionnaires were distributed to 2000 individuals from December 2006 to February 2007. The participants were interviewed by either a health professional or a trained interviewer.

Result: Two thousand questionnaires were received; nevertheless, not all of them did answer all the questions. One thousand two hundred ninety-seven (65.1%) heard of beta thalassemia and 809 (40.5%) knew that both parents have to be carriers to have an affected child. One thousand five hundred forty-seven (77.8%) strongly agreed that premarital checking could prevent beta thalassemia. Females showed better knowledge than males and married individuals seem to know more about beta thalassemia than unmarried.

Conclusion: The study sample seems to have poor knowledge of beta thalassemia indicating the need for improving their basic knowledge of the disease. Further stress on the importance of continuing the screening campaigns specially the student screening program, premarital counseling and newborn screening service is advised.

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