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STUDY REGARDING THE POPULATION'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOOD HYGIENE

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Abstract

Foodborne diseases are a growing public health problem worldwide. They encompass a wide spectrum of illnesses caused by microbial, parasitic or chemical contamination of food. Reliable epidemiological estimates on the burden of foodborne diseases are important in order to assess the impact of food safety measures and advise policy-makers on the cost-effective use of resources. Maybe, one of the most important steps in reducing the impact of foodborne diseases is to make people understand what the mean, what they are and, especially, how can they be prevented.

Key words: foodborne disease, hygiene, public alimentation.

INTRODUCTION

Cases of foodborne illness occur daily in all countries, from the most to the least developed. As most of these cases are not reported, the true dimension of the problem is unknown, and efforts to secure the resources and support necessary for the identification and implementation of effective solutions often fail.

Effective control of foodborne disease must be based on evaluated information about foodborne hazards and the incidence of foodborne disease. Development of a strategy to reduce food-related risks requires knowledge about the current levels of foodborne disease and about the targets and timeframe for improving food safety. This should be an ongoing process, in which new targets are set when old ones are achieved, and progress should be monitored continuously in targeted surveys.

The absence of reliable data on the burden of foodborne disease impedes understanding about its public health importance and prevents the development of risk- based solutions to its management.

Innovative strategies and methods are needed for surveying foodborne disease and food contamination, but first of all there are needed measures to analyzed human attitude and measures taken by society for its health.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Public alimentation plays a key role in the prevalence of foodborne diseases. Given these considerations, this paper has the following objectives:

- evaluating the incidence of forborne diseases;
- determining the impact of this disease on public health;
- identification of risk awareness and prevention methods for foodborne diseases.

Materials used for this study are: the statistical database of the Department of Public Health Bihor and questionnaire applied to a number of 100 persons, interpreted by the use of graphs.

Research methods included: questionnaire, statistical interpretation and retrospective epidemiological study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Found data shows that in 2009, in Bihor County there have been identified a number of nearly 4,000 cases of foodborne disease; morbidity by this pathology indicates a slight upward trend over the previous year. Distribution of cases by area of origin is shown in Table 1. and outbreaks of Salmonellosis in Bihor County are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Area	No. cases		
Urban	1842		
Rural	2096		
Total	3938		

Incidence of foodborne disease in Bihor Country (2009)

Table 2

Area	Aleşd	Beiuş	Marghita	Salonta	Oradea	Total
Urban	0	2	5	0	49	56
Rural	2	4	2	4	18	30
Total	2	6	7	4	67	86

Outbreaks of Salmonellosis in Bihor Country

By applying the questionnaire, there were pursued habits related to food hygiene, personal hygiene taken before eating, preventive measures taken against illness and, in a general way, we wanted to identify people's knowledge regarding food hygiene and foodborne diseases.

On the frequency of washing hands there were recorded the following results:



Fig. 1. Frequencies of hand wash in women



Fig. 2. Frequencies of hand wash in men

From the youth group, women are giving more attention to washing hands. 68% of women wash their hands 5-10x a day, while only 46% of men under 25 gave the same answer.

From Figures 1 and 2, it shows that women and men aged between 25-50 years, wash their hands as similar percentage: half of those asked said they wash their hands 5-10 times.

Elderly group is washing hands less then 5 times a day.

It is important to preceded any food consumption be by proper hand washing. When asked "Do you wash your hands before eating?" charts present the following results:



Fig. 3. Washing hands before eating in women



Fig. 4. Washing hands before eating in men

Figures 3 and 4 show that the population (between 83-96%) washes its hands before eating. Age group 25-50 years gives most attention to washing hands before eating.



Regarding consumption of unwashed fruits and vegetables, the results are presented in Figures 5 and 6.

Fig. 5. Consumption of unwashed fruits or vegetables in women



Fig. 6. Consumption of unwashed fruits or vegetables in men

Persons under 25 years, mostly wash fruits and vegetables before eating them. But 28% of women and 12% of men said that only in some cases they wash fruits and vegetables before enjoying them.

From the other two age groups, 73-86% said they do not eat unwashed fruit, this shows that those under 25 years give less attention to washing food before eating them. An important approach to prevent foodborne diseases is keeping food at refrigeration temperatures. Attitude of respondents in this aspect is shown in Figures 7 and 8.



Fig. 7. Depositing food after preparation (women)



Fig. 8. Depositing food after preparation (men)

Most of those asked, regardless of age or sex, store food in the refrigerator, but there are cases (between 6 and 10%) who do not realize the risks they expose themselves and keep food at room temperature.

If case of notifying non-compliance of hygiene norms in a public alimentation unit, those interviewed denoted the following attitudes:



Fig. 9. Attitude in front of non-compliance of hygiene norms in public alimentation unit (women)



Fig. 10. Attitude in front of non-compliance of hygiene norms in public alimentation unit (men)

Most of the population (including all age groups), when noticing non-compliance of hygiene in public alimentation units, does nothing, it prefers a rather indifferent attitude. This result may be an explanation for the inability to stop this pathological phenomenon. Reducing the occurrence of foodborne diseases is possible only with simultaneous participation of the entire population. These percentages show that one of the problems facing the health institution in stopping the granting of disease is the lack of attention to risk factors.

On average, 30% of surveyed women prefer not to use the services of the unit.

CONCLUSIONS

Hygiene is a key element in preventing foodborne diseases.

Thus, the simplest gestures can reflect the risk we expose ourselves. Washing hands should be a reflex gesture before eating.

Generally people wash their hands between 5-10 times a day, especially before eating. Women aged between 25-50 years are more careful about this.

Age proves to be a factor of wisdom when it comes to eating unwashed fruit: only 10-15% of those aged over 50 years eat unwashed fruits, compared with 30% of young people who admit this habit.

The refrigerator is the main food storage room in 90% of cases.

50% of respondents, when notify hygiene lack in a public alimentation unit, do nothing, approaching a rather indifferent attitude and up to 25% of people point to the service provider. Attitudes more "drastic" (announcement of OPC's) are taken by approximately 15% of respondents, while the rest refuse to use the services of that unit in the future.

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