

Knowledge and attitudes of Iranian patients with regard to lumbar puncture

To the Editor

I read the interesting study by Borhani-Haghighi et al¹ on the knowledge and attitudes of Iranian patients with regard to lumbar puncture. Lumbar puncture (LP) is frequently performed in pediatric wards for diagnostic and less often for therapeutic purposes. The decision to perform LP for a diseased child induces in clinical settings a state of panic attack in parents due to their misbeliefs on its safety. I do agree with Borhani-Haghighi et al¹ that the best way to mitigate unwillingness to do LP is education of families on the indications, contraindications, and complications of LP with special emphasis on those with low educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and those residing in rural areas. Family member presence during routine invasive procedures such as LP has become a matter of concern in recent years. In an Australian study,² the number of parents expressing a desire to be present during LP performed on their child was 83.4%. The most common reason for wanting to be present was to provide comfort to their child (98%). Moreover, medical personnel were found to have shown positive attitudes towards parental attendance during performing LP for their child. In an American study,³ most emergency physicians (65.7%) and nurses (55%) indicated that parents should be present for LP. Therefore, parental witnessing of their child undergoing LP can markedly lower the grave consequences of deferring LP, enhance their positive attitudes towards that traumatic procedure through soothing and/or helping restrain the child, and ultimately improve the public knowledge on the safety of that procedure.

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Reply from the Author

Professor Al-Mendalawi wisely mentions the usefulness of attendance of the parents of children undergoing lumbar puncture at the time of the procedure. We basically do agree with his valuable comment, however, one point should be kept in mind. Although experienced physicians may have positive attitudes to attendance of the parents, medical students or residents who perform this procedure for the first time may consider parental witnessing as a stressor. Attendance of parents should be individualized according to legal, cultural, and emotional factors.

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