Role of malaria control program in Pakistan: A myth or reality?
Malik M1,2, Hussien AA2 and Lubbe SM1
1North-West University, South Africa
2Hamdard University, Pakistan

Background: Malaria is one of the global public health problems and imposes a major health burden in developing countries. It is a major health problem, threatening the health of the people due to prevailing socio-economic conditions and epidemiological situation in Pakistan. Malaria control program was initiated in Pakistan in 1950s and has passed through several evolutionary phases. A malaria control strategy was adopted in 1975 with provincial commitment to implementation and Pakistan joined the global Roll Back Malaria (RBM) initiative in 1998 to combat the disease, thus a qualitative study was designed to explore the role of malaria control program, major outstanding challenges faced by the program in promoting rational drug use, achievements and future prospective of the program for advancing resource mobilization and collaborative partnerships.

Purpose & Methods: A qualitative study design was used to explore the perceptions’ of malaria control program officials regarding role of malaria control program in Pakistan. The study was approved by experts at Malaria Control Program, Ministry of Health, Pakistan. Eight semi-structured interviews with all the officials working at malaria control program in Islamabad were conducted by using an interview guide. The interviews, which were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, were evaluated by thematic content analysis and by other authors’ analysis.

Results: The interviews with officials focused on three major components, i.e., working and outreach of the program, strategies and major challenges faced for promoting rational drug use in malaria control and achievements and future prospective of the program. Thematic content analysis of these components yielded additional major themes and sub-themes. In view of most of the officials’ inappropriate diagnosis, anti malarial resistance, lack of trained staff and inappropriate drug management are the major factors promoting irrational drug use in the treatment of malaria in Pakistan. All the respondents agreed on successful implementation of malaria control program in Pakistan in controlling malaria by improving diagnostic and treatment facilities and promotion of rational case management through training of prescribers. Most of the officials think training, rational drug use, low number of cases of resistance and effective treatment of confirmed cases of malaria as the major achievements of the program. Monitoring plan and reviewing the sale of antimalarial drugs are seen as the tools for monitoring of the program by the officials. Public awareness, proper coordination with health care system and extensive coverage of the program are seen as the future prospective by the officials.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that malaria control program in Pakistan has targeted high endemic areas which focus in the nineteen districts of the country and successful in achieving its targets. But still, funding is the major challenge faced by the program for its implementation in future. Thus, government of Pakistan, private sector, stakeholders and development partners have to unite their efforts and work together to expand the national malaria control program for achieving the national millennium development goals.

Biography
Malik M has completed her PhD in 2013 from University Sains Malaysia in Pharmacy Practice. She has been serving as an Assistant Professor and Coordinator for MPhil Pharmacy Practice at Faculty of Pharmacy, Hamdard University Islamabad, Pakistan. At present, she is working as a Post-doctoral research fellow at Medicine Usage in South Africa (MUSA), School of Pharmacy, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Potchefstroom. She has published more than 50 papers in reputed journals and serving as an Editorial Board Member of repute.

Notes: