



Mosquito Net: An Underrecognized Protection Measure against Snakebites

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DEAR EDITOR,

Snakes and few arthropods bring out fear among humans as they pose threat to life. Fear for snakes is expected as worldwide snakebite causes 125,000 deaths every year. Among all the countries affected, India alone contributes to 40% of global burden of snakebite deaths. Since young adults were mostly affected, estimated disability-adjusted life years were two million and also reflected in an economic burden on families.^[1] Countries affected by snakebite also have a higher incidence of mosquito-borne diseases which shows an epidemiological overlap between snakes and mosquitoes. At risk population for both, the deadly bites are the rural people of low socioeconomic status who spent their nights at home sleeping on floor.^[2]

We encountered a case where two sisters were saved from a possible cobra (*Naja naja*) bite after it fell from the roof in midnight onto the mosquito net, in which the girls were sleeping. Later, the snake was rescued by a snake rescuer [Figure 1a]. Besides this, on numerous occasions, the first author had himself rescued snakes from roof/ceilings [Figure 1b]. Snakes are frequent visitors of the households for shelter and in search of their prey. It is an observation of the authors that well-tucked mosquito nets can not only protect individuals from mosquitoes, ground crawling insects, and snakes but also from accidental fall of snakes from top. A study in Nepal confirms such mechanical protective nature of mosquito net against snakebite.^[3]

Although mosquito nets are well-established public health measure against mosquito-borne diseases, they have poor acceptance in community. Such behavior is an attitudinal issues incorporated at individual or family level.^[4] Creating public awareness about dual protective effect of mosquito nets will help in changing such



Figure 1: (a) A common cobra rescued from the top of mosquito net. (b) First author rescuing another *Naja naja* from thatched roof (photograph by authors)

behavior. Apart from mosquito and snakebite, nets can protect from deadly bites of other crawling creatures. Using such inherent fear from snakes/arthropods in promotion of mosquito nets may have a greater impact in increasing actual usage of mosquito nets. Few researchers have different opinions on inclusion of fear factor in health promotion, but there is a strong evidence that fear can be effective in behavioral change if such change leads to a reduction in level of fear.^[5]

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