

Challenges in House Dust Mite Allergies in the Philippines

Mini Review

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Abstract

In recent decades, allergic diseases, particularly those caused by House Dust Mites (HDMs), have become increasingly prevalent, significantly affecting the quality of life for millions worldwide. HDMs are a primary source of potent allergens that induce allergic reactions, impacting up to 130 million individuals globally. In tropical climates like the Philippines, HDMs are a major concern, with about 47% of atopic patients sensitized to these allergens due to the favorable warm and humid environment. The management of HDM allergies in this country is complicated by socio-economic challenges, limited public awareness, inadequate diagnostic facilities, and insufficient healthcare resources, leading to reduced quality of life and increased healthcare expenses. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including public health campaigns, financial assistance, and improvements in healthcare services. Enhancing living conditions, raising awareness, and providing comprehensive healthcare support can significantly improve combating HDM allergies and may improve the quality of life for affected individuals in the Philippines.

Keywords: Allergic Diseases; Allergens; Atopic; House Dust Mites

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In recent decades, allergic diseases have become significantly more common. The majority of these diseases are caused by allergens from House Dust Mites (HDMs). These mites are sources of potent allergens that induce allergic reactions and profoundly impact the quality of life of affected individuals [1]. The causative agents of these conditions are specific antigenic molecules called allergens that trigger an abnormal immune response characterized by an increased production of immunoglobulin epsilon [2]. Among sources of allergens, HDMs are one of the leading causes of chronic disorders and act as major disease triggers, representing a significant global health threat. These allergens sensitize and trigger allergies in a number of atopic individuals, affecting up to 130 million people worldwide [3]. Persistent exposure to HDMs can result in serious conditions such as atopic dermatitis, allergic rhinitis, or allergic asthma. In Southeast Asian nations with tropical climates, like the Philippines, HDMs remain a significant concern leading to allergic diseases that progressively worsen over time. In the Philippines, about 47% of atopic patients are sensitized to HDMs [4]. This has been attributed to the fact that these mites thrive in a warm and humid environment that is conducive to their proliferation. These conditions are difficult to mitigate unless individuals are educated and aware of the necessary precautions to reduce exposure to HDMs. Unfortunately, many Filipinos were not educated enough about HDM allergies and many patients have not been properly diagnosed. Hence, HDM allergies impose a substantial medical and socio-economic burden among Filipino individuals.

Socio-economic conditions significantly influence the management

of HDM allergies in the Philippines. The majority of the Filipino population is living below the poverty line, having difficulty securing essential needs such as food and housing. In these situations, dealing with allergies becomes less of a priority. Hence, HDM allergies are still common in lower-income households where preventive measures are less likely to be taken. Similarly, education and awareness about HDM allergies remain limited. With these, many Filipinos might not identify symptoms of HDM allergies nor reduce their exposure. Public health awareness campaigns and educational programs are vital but often lack funding and reach. Lacking adequate knowledge and resources, affected individuals continue to suffer resulting to reduced quality of life and increased healthcare expenses over time.

The Philippine healthcare system faces a number of challenges in addressing HDM allergies. Access to an allergologist and appropriate diagnostic facilities is limited especially in rural areas. Additionally, many healthcare professionals lack training and resources to accurately diagnose and treat HDM allergies, resulting in misdiagnoses and ineffective treatment modalities. Moreover, the expense of allergy tests and long-term management is also a significant barrier because even if facilities are accessible and available, financial burdens may dissuade patients from seeking proper treatment. Medications to address symptoms of HDM allergies including antihistamines and corticosteroids are often unaffordable for those with limited financial resources. This problem is tightly worsened by the lack of public health services and insurance that covers allergy treatment modalities.

Addressing the challenges of HDM allergies in the Philippines requires coordinated and ongoing efforts across various sectors.



Public health campaigns to raise awareness about HDM allergies and educate the public on effective preventive measures for managing allergies may enable individuals to take proactive steps. Various community centers, schools, and media outlets may be instrumental in disseminating such information. On the socio-economic side, financial aid for medical treatments and grants for hypoallergenic research and products were essential. Additionally, the healthcare system may improve by widening access to diagnostic services such as allergy testing which ensures a precise and accurate identification of HDM allergies. Also, increasing the number of trained allergy specialists may address gaps in diagnosis and treatment. Continuous training of healthcare providers may ensure that professionals are well-informed and updated on the best practices and new treatment options.

Albeit HDM allergies in the Philippines are multifaceted and are influenced by environmental, socioeconomic, and healthcare-related factors. Addressing this issue necessitates a holistic approach which includes improving living conditions, raising public awareness, providing financial support, and research funding, and enhancing

healthcare services. By concentrating on these key aspects, the country can enhance the management of HDM allergies and improve the quality of life of its people.

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