

# Amulet & Health

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## Abstract

Amulet use is global but it is more prevalent in SEA. Use of amulet in Bangladesh is quite common as well. In case of children it is being used for protecting children from all types of diseases & from all danger. The study done in Community Based Medical College Hospital Bangladesh Pediatric ward in the month of 5<sup>th</sup> January, 15 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 15. It was a cross sectional descriptive type of study. Study population 82 admitted children age between six months to sixty months, average  $\pm$  18.37 months. Amulets were found in 29.26%, Male 62.50%, female 37.50%. Average cost involvement \$1.5 for each amulet. Most of the respondent mother were literate but from low socioeconomic condition. Cause of using amulet mostly, to protect child from diseases & from all dangers according to respondent mother. Amulets were given by grand father or mother, Imam of mosque or by Kabiraj. In response to a question whether it is really protective to child or not, about 40% told that it is effective & the others were not sure or reluctant to pass any comment.

CBMJ 2017 July: Vol. 06 No. 02 P: 03-05

**Key words :** Amulet, talisman, pediatric, Kabiraj etc.

## Introduction

Belief, superstition, tradition are common in any society & we are no exception to that. Amulet use in South East Asia & in other parts of the world is common. In India & Bangladesh it is more common than in other parts of SEA. According to dictionary Amulet is a small object worn to ward off evil, harm or illness or to bring good fortune; protecting charm.<sup>1</sup>

According to British dictionary amulet is a trinket or piece of jewellery worn as a protection against evil; charm.<sup>2</sup> An amulet is an object whose most important characteristic is the power ascribed to it to protect its owner from danger or harm.<sup>3</sup>

The word "amulet" comes from the Latin *amulum*; the earliest extant use of the term is in Pliny's *Natural History*, meaning "an object that protects a person from trouble".<sup>4</sup>

Amulets vary considerably according to their time and place of origin. In many societies, religious objects serve as amulets, e.g. deriving from the ancient Celts, the clover, if it has four leaves, symbolizes good luck (not the Irish shamrock, which symbolizes the Christian Trinity).<sup>5</sup>

In Bolivia, the God Ekeko furnishes a standard amulet, to whom one should offer at least one banknote or a cigarette to obtain fortune and welfare.<sup>6</sup> In certain areas of India, Nepal and

Sri Lanka, it is traditionally believed that the jackal's horn can grant wishes and reappear to its owner at its own accord when lost. Some Sinhalese believe that the horn can grant the holder invulnerability in any lawsuit.<sup>7</sup>

In the Philippines, amulets are called *agimat* or *anting-anting*. According to folklore, the most powerful *anting-anting* is the *hiyas saging* (directly translated as pearl or gem of the banana). The *hiyas* must come from a mature banana and only comes out during midnight. Before the person can fully possess this *agimat*, he must fight a supernatural creature called *kapre*. Only then will he be its true owner. During Holy Week, devotees travel to Mount Banahaw to recharge their amulets.<sup>8</sup>

According to literature, use of amulet is world wide. But its design, quality & contents varies.

## Objectives

To find out how many admitted children in pediatric ward are using amulet, their age & sex distribution, cost involved, educational,

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sociodemographic condition of parents, who asked for using amulet & the effect of amulet on children's health.

### Methods

Cross sectional descriptive type of study.

Study place : Community Based Medical College Hospital, Bangladesh , Pediatric ward.

Study period – January 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Study population – All the Admitted children in pediatric ward during that period.

Data collection – By observation & by interview.

Data analysis- By Microsoft excel.

### Results

Total admitted patients were 82 during the period 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> January,15. Amulets were found in 24 kids (29.26%). Of them male children were 15 (62.50%) & female were 9 (37.50%). Average age  $\pm$  18.37 months. Cost involved for each amulet average \$1.5. From interview it revealed that , in 55% cases amulet was given by Imam of mosque, then 15% by maternal or paternal grand mother or father, 20% by Kabiraj & rest by neighbors & distant relatives. Cause of using amulet in more than 80% of cases is to protect the child from diseases& from all danger. Only 3 mother(12.5%) of the amulet user were graduates, 17 (71%) educational status of mother was class VIII to Class X1. Rest were illiterate. All the patients using amulets were from low income class family. About 40% told that it is effective & the others were not sure& were reluctant to pass any comment about the effect.

### Discussion

Study population were 82 admitted children aging 6 months to 60 months. Study period 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> January,2015. Amulets were found in 24 kids (29.26%). Of them male children were 15 (62.50%) & female were 9 (37.50%).

Average age  $\pm$  18.37 months. Cost involved for each amulet average $\pm$  \$ 1.5. From interview it revealed that , in 55% cases amulet was given by Imam (priest) of mosque, then 15% by maternal or paternal grand mother, 20% by Kabiraj & rest by neighbors & distant relatives. Cause of using amulet in more than 80% of cases is to protect the child from diseases& from all danger. Only 3 mother(12.5%) of the amulet user were graduates, 17 (71%) educational status of mother was class VIII to Class X1, rest were illiterate. All the patients using amulets were from low income class family. About 40% told that it is effective & the others were not sure.

Lead poisoning are not uncommon in children & mainly paints& painting materials are source. But in a study however, nonpaint sources have been identified as the cause of lead poisoning, particularly in immigrant communities. This report describes a case of lead poisoning in a child aged 1 year that was investigated by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (NYC DOHMH) Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in 2009. The likely source of exposure was an amulet made in Cambodia with leaded beads that was worn by the child. Educational efforts are needed to inform Southeast Asian immigrants that amulets can be a source of lead poisoning.<sup>9</sup>

In a study in Turkey it is found that most of the Epileptic patients carrying an amulet with a hope that it will cure the disease.<sup>10</sup>

In a study in Israel in an ICU they found almost every patient is having amulet. The use of talismans in a technologically advanced western society is more frequent than may have been thought. Medical and paramedical

personnel dealing with very ill patients should be aware of the emotional and psychological implications of such beliefs and practices on patients and their families.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

In our study we did not noticed any side effects for using amulets but we did not come in to any conclusion, that it's use can do any good to the patients. Sometimes users also know that it's use may not help yet they cannot resist themselves from using it. It may be because of belief, customs & long continued tradition. So finally we can't recommend to use amulet for protecting children from diseases but we can't refrain them as well, as that can hurt their belief, customs & tradition.

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