

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS AMONG PRIMARY HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN SRI LANKA ON FIRST AID AND SAFETY FOR POISONING

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Introduction:

Poisoning is the sixth leading cause of hospital deaths in Sri Lanka. Annually around 3000 people die from poisoning. Education and appropriate first aid and safety will reduce harm from poisoning. A delay in pre-hospital care adversely affects the outcome. The proximity of the Public Health Care (PHC) workers capable to provide pre hospital care is important in addressing this need.

Objective:

To assess the knowledge, attitudes and skills among PHC workers on first aid and safety for poisoning

Method:

One hundred and seventeen PHC workers (21 Public Health Inspectors and 96 Public Health Midwives) were selected as the study sample from three purposively selected Medical Officer of Health areas for this cross sectional, descriptive study. Knowledge, attitudes and skills in first aid and safety for poisoning were the dependent variables studied. A structured self administered questionnaire was used for data collection on knowledge and attitudes. A practical test with a check list was used for skills assessment on resuscitation and stabilization.

Results:

The response rate was 87% (n = 102). The PHC workers had an average knowledge score of 60% on first aid for poisoning. Among them, 78 (76%) did not know the routes of entry of a poison into the body. None of them knew the appropriate first aid for swallowed poisons. Attitudes towards practice of first aid in poisoning were unfavourable in 29% of the PHC workers while the average skills score on first aid for poisoning was 27%.

Among the PHC workers, 58% had not studied first aid at all. Those who had previous training in first aid in poisoning (42%) had a higher knowledge score (70%) and skills score (35%) compared to the scores of those who had no previous training (50% and 18% respectively). 84% of the PHC workers suggested having first aid for poisoning as a compulsory subject in their basic training.

Conclusion:

Knowledge on first aid and safety for poisoning among the PHC workers in Sri Lanka was inadequate. Attitudes towards first aid practices too were not very satisfactory. The skill level in first aid was extremely poor. Previous training in first aid facilitated improvement in knowledge and skills. Capacity building of PHC workers on first aid and safety for poisoning will help to reduce morbidity and mortality from poisoning in Sri Lanka.