

Knowledge and practices on handling of sharps among healthcare workers of two hospitals in Sri Lanka

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Introduction and Objectives: This study investigates the knowledge and practices of healthcare workers (HCWs) in two hospitals in Sri Lanka concerning sharps injuries, a critical occupational health concern. The study aims to assess the level of knowledge, training, and adherence to safe practices among HCWs in relation to sharps injuries.

Methods: This cross-sectional survey was conducted at the Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya (THP) and Base Hospital, Kamburupitiya, (BHK), involving healthcare professionals including medical officers, nursing officers, and medical laboratory technologists. Data collection utilised a structured questionnaire, developed in alignment with established guidelines and previous research. A pre-test was conducted to refine the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise participant characteristics, while knowledge and practice scores were computed to assess HCWs' proficiency. Group differences were analysed using independent t-tests, and the relationship between knowledge and practice was evaluated with a paired t-test. Data were managed using Excel and analysed with SPSS (version 21).

Results: In this study, 449 of 481 distributed questionnaires were completed, resulting in a response rate of approximately 93.35%. The mean knowledge score for the entire population was 48.66, with THP participants scoring higher at 52.9 compared to BHK participants at 41.9 ($p < 0.05$). However, the mean practice score for the total population was 57.28, with similar scores between THP (57.2) and BHK (57.3), indicating no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). The correlation coefficient of 0.312 and a p-value of <0.001 between the mean scores of knowledge and practice in this study indicate a significant, moderate positive relationship.

Conclusions: The results highlight the need for improved training and awareness programmes for HCWs, particularly in areas of infection prevention and sharps handling. Although a significant proportion of participants were knowledgeable about post exposure prophylaxis and vaccinated against Hepatitis B, there is room for enhancing knowledge levels. The study identified the importance of consistent adherence to safe practices and reveals the current state of knowledge and practices among HCWs in Sri Lanka regarding sharps injuries.

Keywords: Needle prick injuries, handling of sharps, healthcare workers, knowledge and practices

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