

Knowledge of hand hygiene and factors associated with it among healthcare workers in a teaching hospital in Sri Lanka

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Background: Hand hygiene is critical to prevent healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). The World Health Organization's (WHO) "Five Moments" model and guidelines emphasise the importance of proper hand hygiene to enhance patient safety and reduce infection transmission risks. Despite its proven effectiveness, adherence rates for hand hygiene may vary among healthcare workers due to various factors.

Objectives: To describe knowledge and the factors associated with the knowledge on hand hygiene among healthcare workers at a teaching hospital in Sri Lanka.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 355 healthcare workers. A systematic sampling method was performed. The WHO hand hygiene knowledge questionnaire for healthcare workers was modified, translated into Sinhala and Tamil, pretested and administered as a self-administered tool. Data analysis was done (SPSS 25.0 version). P value<0.05 was considered as significant.

Results: Of the 355 participants, the majority were females (n=245, 69.0%) and had received higher education (n=205, 57.7%). The majority (n=271, 76.3%) had satisfactory knowledge on hand hygiene. Most (n=226, 63.7%) had received formal training on hand hygiene in the last 3 years and were using soap and water (99.4%) as the main method for hand hygiene. Overall knowledge was satisfactory on 5 moments (correctly answered by 70-95.8%) and indications (correctly answered by 99.3-97.3%) for hand hygiene. However, only a few (14.6%) knew the order of all the steps in hand washing correctly. A statistically significant association was observed between knowledge on hand hygiene and designation (p<0.05). Doctors (88.1%) and nursing officers (83.3%) had satisfactory knowledge on hand hygiene when compared to other healthcare workers (57.3%). The association between knowledge on hand hygiene and the highest educational level was also statistically significant (p<0.05); satisfactory knowledge was demonstrated by 82.4% of participants with diploma or higher education and 68% with education levels up to A/L.

Conclusion: Overall knowledge on hand hygiene was satisfactory among the majority of healthcare workers at the selected hospital. However, important gaps in knowledge were identified, especially regarding the correct method of hand hygiene. Designation and highest educational level were significantly associated with the knowledge.

Keywords: Healthcare workers, hand hygiene, knowledge

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