

Knowledge of nurses regarding oro-pharyngeal dysphagia in the Badulla district.

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Background: Oro-pharyngeal dysphagia is a condition with life threatening complications. In hospital settings, in most occasions nurses are the first health care professionals to come in contact with such patients. Knowledge of oro-pharyngeal dysphagia signs and symptoms, complications, and role of Speech and language therapists in dysphagia assessment and management are crucial for nurses working in such settings. A lack of knowledge of oro-pharyngeal dysphagia can result in detrimental consequences and this can be fatal for the patient.

Objective/s: The main purpose of this study was to determine the level of knowledge of nurses regarding oro-pharyngeal dysphagia in the Badulla district, Sri Lanka

Methods: A quantitative, descriptive cross sectional survey study was conducted. The study was conducted in the three types of hospitals in Badulla district. 138 nurses working in General, Base, and divisional hospitals in Badulla district were participants of the study. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: Majority of the participants of the study were female (n = 121, 87.7%). Male participants were 17 (12.3%). The mean age of the participants was 34.92 years. The study findings specified that nurses demonstrate moderate knowledge of the signs, symptoms (Average correct response score = 8.1/13, 62.60%) and complications (Average correct response score = 6.1/10, 60.73%) of oro-pharyngeal dysphagia. Knowledge of nurses regarding role of speech and language therapists in oro-pharyngeal dysphagia was 5.4/8 (67.6%). There were no significant differences between the different types of hospitals for the knowledge on signs and symptoms of oro-pharyngeal dysphagia.

Conclusion/s: The study provided that nurses' levels of knowledge on oro-pharyngeal dysphagia had only moderate level. Further formal training on dysphagia and collaboration between speech and language therapists and nurses may improve early identification and management of oro-pharyngeal dysphagia.

Key words: *Oro-pharyngeal dysphagia, nurse, role of speech and language therapist*