

Knowledge and Practices towards Prevention of Dengue Fever in a Cohort of Advanced Level Students

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Introduction: The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge and practices towards Dengue fever (DF) of a group of Sri Lankan students.

Materials and methods: This was a combined qualitative and quantitative study from June to July 2016. Students in the Advanced Level classes of a trilingual mixed school following different streams (Science, Mathematics, Arts, and Commerce) were enrolled using the cluster sampling method. A face-validated self-administered questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used to collect data.

Results: Of 40 respondents, 80.0 % (n=32) were females. The mean age was 16.3 ± 0.6 years. The mean scores were: knowledge ($68.2\% \pm 12.2\%$) and positive practices towards prevention of DF spread ($46.4\% \pm 29.6\%$). Scores were non-normally distributed [$W(40) = .799, p < .05$]. Twenty percent of the subjects (n=8) believed that direct contact of an infected person can spread Dengue. Majority used nets (60%, n=24), insecticide sprays/coils (55%, n=22) and lotions (15%, n=6) to prevent mosquito bites in general. Forty five percent (n=18) have started using methods to prevent mosquito bites with the fear towards Dengue mosquito bites. The practice scores positively correlated with the knowledge score [$r_s(40) = .269, p = .000$]. According to the qualitative interviews (n=28), majority believed that individuals have an important role in preventing DF.

Conclusions and recommendations: Knowledge and practices towards the prevention of DF were modest in the population. Good knowledge and attitudes were associated with better practices. Thus steps should be taken to enhance knowledge and attitudes on DF prevention.

Keywords: Dengue, Sri Lanka, students, knowledge, practices

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