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Knowledge and Attitudes towards Thalassemia and Pre-Marital Screening Tests among Undergraduates of Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Ahnaf M.A.M.[#], Atapattu A.M.P.P.

Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya

[#]Corresponding author: ahnaffabdullah@gmail.com

Background: Thalassemia is considered as the commonest single gene disorder in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, poor awareness regarding the screening tests is one of the major combative factors that could lead to Thalassemia by Thalassemia carriers who have unsafe marriages. In order to establish effective preventive strategies, it is essential to identify the existing knowledge gap at community level. As future health care professionals, Allied Health Science undergraduates should have significant role and responsibility to contribute for preventing recognized health burden diseases among community.

Objective: To assess the knowledge and attitudes on Thalassemia and Premarital Screening (PMS) tests among the students of Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya.

Methodology: This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences. This study included 213 students selected using the stratified random sampling technique. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire included demographic data, knowledge towards thalassemia and PMS.

Results: The findings revealed that majority of participants (n= 184, 86.38%) have heard about the aetiology of Thalassemia, with a mean knowledge score of one out of 15 questions (n= 121, 56.76%). Out of total participants, 55.4% had never heard about PMS tests. When consider about the attitude level, 72.3% had positive attitudes towards prevention of Thalassemia while 98.1% had positive attitudes towards facing to PMS. Based on the findings, overall knowledge towards Thalassemia and PMS is at good level and attitudes regarding the above r areas are at positive or favourable level.

Conclusions: To confirm the observations, large scale studies need to be conducted comprising of different study populations. Increasing emphasis on thalassemia in the undergraduate curriculum might improve budding student's knowledge and attitudes about Thalassemia.

Keywords: *Attitudes, Awareness, Knowledge, Premarital screening tests, Thalassemia*