

Knowledge on post exposure treatment for Rabies among general practitioners in the Southern Province, Sri Lanka

Gunesekara H.M.D.P.P^{1*}, Vanlangenberg A.P.², Kumarapperuma K.K.², Mahanama J.K.³ and Damayanthi T.⁴

¹*General Hospital, Matara, Sri Lanka*

²*General Hospital, Hambantota, Sri Lanka*

³*Teaching Hospital, Mahamodara, Sri Lanka*

⁴*Teaching Hospital, Karapitiya, Sri Lanka*

Rabies is a zoonotic disease that is essentially fatal. Post-exposure treatment (PET) is the immediate treatment of a bite victim after rabies exposure. Proper knowledge on PET among doctors is crucial in preventing rabies deaths. Objective of this study was to describe knowledge on post exposure treatment for Rabies among General Practitioners in Southern Province. A descriptive cross sectional study was performed, involving all General Practitioners (GP's) who serve in Southern Province. Sampling frame was prepared by obtaining all the names of GP's in Southern Province by applying several sources like GP's association data base and Health Ministry data base. Simple random sampling was done to choose required number of participants out of the study population. A structured self-administered questionnaire was used. It was pretested by giving to 5 GP's in Colombo District. Variables were based on guidelines on PET issued by Ministry of Health. There were closed ended questions arranged under 4 sub headings. An invitation letter was send with questionnaire and then information was collected from returning ones that arrived via post. A 'composite score' was developed by assigning marks to correct answers (maximum 20). Equal weight was given to all questionnaire items. Out of the 465 who were invited, only 336 responded (non-response 27.7%). Mean age was 33.2 (SD 6.2). Majority were females (n= 348, 75.0%) and doing part time GP practice (n= 407, 87.5%). Knowledge of giving oral antibiotic and avoidance of suturing following bite were satisfactory (63.5% and 87.5% were correctly noted). Majority clearly defined period of last vaccine in determining the immunity status. Identification of criteria for major exposure was also good. Mean score was 14.4 and could be considered as satisfactory. Those who were having post graduate qualifications showed a better knowledge than others (p = 0.02, t 3.23). GP's in Southern Province were having a satisfactory knowledge. Those who had PG qualifications showed a better knowledge than others.

Keywords: General Practitioners, post exposure treatment, rabies

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*Corresponding Author: lagathre@gmail.com