

Knowledge and attitudes on pain management among nursing officers serving in selected Government Hospitals in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Pain is one of the commonest symptoms among patients seeking treatment. Poor management of pain cause distress and it affects the quality of life of patients and their families. Nurses play an important role in management of pain since they are the first-line of contact with patients very often. This study assessed the knowledge, attitudes and the relationship between knowledge and attitudes on pain management among nursing officers.

Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among sixty nursing officers from five government hospitals in Gampaha District. (A convenient sample of 12 nurses from each hospital). Data were collected using an interviewer administered questionnaire which contained questions to collect demographic data of participants and to assess their knowledge and attitudes on pain management.

Results

Out of 60 participants 86.7% (n=52) were females. Mean (SD) service experience was 14.4 (6.7) years with a range from 3 to 29 years. Fifty-five (91.7%) participants were nursing diploma holders while the remaining five (8.3%) were B.Sc. nursing degree holders. The mean score (SD) of knowledge was 6.57 (2.3) with maximum possible score of 15 out of 15 questions (i.e. 43.5%) while the mean score (SD) of attitudes was 41.42 (6.7) with maximum possible score of 72 for 24 statements (i.e. 57.5%). A positive correlation was identified between knowledge and attitudes on pain management among nursing officers. Questions on signs and symptoms of physical dependency following discontinuation of opioids and the question on opioid addiction were particularly poorly answered.

Conclusions

The knowledge and attitudes on pain management among nurses studied is inadequate and more in-service training programmes related to pain management is crucial.