

**OP 18**

**An Analysis of Coping Strategies for Managing Stress among Healthcare Professional Undergraduates of University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka**

Peiris T.S.A.<sup>1#</sup>, Prasadi G.A.M.<sup>2</sup>, Hettihewa S.K.<sup>2</sup>, Karunaratna A.C.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*

*#Corresponding author: shamiddhipeiris@gmail.com*

**Background:** University is the best platform which provides opportunities for undergraduates to develop their successful career. However, it is noticed that university life has become stressful for undergraduates due to different reasons. Stress is known as a serious issue which affects the performance of undergraduates of healthcare system. Coping strategies are in demand for managing stress in the context of delivering prudent healthcare professionals to the nation.

**Objectives:** To identify the types of stressors and evaluate the coping strategies among healthcare professional undergraduates of University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

**Methods:** The study was based on a cross-sectional survey. Data were collected from 343 healthcare professional undergraduates from Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Allied Health Sciences having used stratified random sampling method and a self-administered structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using SPSS version 16.

**Results:** The study revealed that majority of the undergraduates (98.8%) were affected by stress. The level of stress reported was very high regarding examinations (52.7%) than the other stressors. Results showed that the commonly practiced coping strategies were sleeping (93.6%) followed by talking to a friend/meeting loved ones (89.8%). Considerable number of participants used alcohol intake (51.9%), smoking (50.4%), illicit drug intake (50.1%) and sexual activities (49.6%) for coping with stress. Results suggested that facilities rendered by two faculties including student counselling services (79.9%), mentoring programme (75.8%) and career guidance services (69.4%) were used by considerable number of undergraduates as coping strategies. There were statistical significant differences among coping strategies with regard to gender, year of study, faculty and degree programme.

**Conclusions:** Healthcare professional undergraduates have high levels of stress mainly caused by academic related sources. Majority of the undergraduates managed to use good coping strategies. However, considerable amount of undergraduates engaged in maladaptive coping strategies that could give serious consequences for their lives.

**Keywords:** *Coping strategies, Healthcare professional undergraduates, Stress, Stressors, University*