Knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards antibiotic use in the general community of Sri Lanka

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Introduction and Objectives: Antimicrobial resistance has become a global health issue due to poor knowledge and attitudes about antibiotic use leading to misuse of antibiotics. Assessing knowledge, attitudes and practices of antibiotic use is therefore crucial. Studies targeting the general population of Sri Lanka are limited, highlighting the timely need of them. The current study was conducted to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices on the use of antibiotics in the general community of Sri Lanka.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in 6 selected "Grama Niladhari divisions": two divisions from Sabaragamuwa and one division each from the Western, Northwestern, Southern and Uva Provinces of Sri Lanka. Convenient sampling technique was used among adults who were not directly employed in the health sector. A WHO validated self-administered questionnaire (Antibiotic resistance: Multi-country public awareness survey 2015) was used for data collection. Data was analysed by Chi-square test and odds ratio (OR) was calculated. Spearman Correlation Coefficient was used to assess correlation between knowledge, attitude, and practices. Cut off values for good, average, and poor were taken as >75%, 50-75% and <50% respectively.

Results: A total of 282 individuals responded to the study, of whom 68.6% (n=186) were females. 46.5% of responders had not heard the term 'antibiotic resistance'. Knowledge on antibiotics and their use was poor in 34.4%, average in 58.2% and good in 7.4%. Only 30.5% had good attitudes on antibiotic use. Practices on antibiotic use was good only in 49.3% A significant association was found between the education level and practice ($P<0.01$) where educated participants were 2.2 times likely to have good practices towards antibiotics than the others (OR=2.193, CI=1.134 - 4.238). Significant positive correlations were observed between knowledge and practice ($r = 0.179$, $p < 0.01$), knowledge and attitude ($r = 0.212$, $p < 0.01$), and attitude and practice ($r = 0.159$, $p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: It is evident from the study that a considerable proportion of the population lacks awareness about proper antibiotic use and its consequences. Hence educational interventions on proper antibiotic use should be targeted towards the general public to raise awareness among them.

Keywords: Antibiotics, Antimicrobial resistance, Attitude, Knowledge, Practice

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