

Awareness about factors related to unintentional paediatric poisoning (UPP) among Sri Lankan mothers attending the Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital

Subasinghe S¹, Thenuwara AN¹, Tharanga DAK¹, Perera J²

¹Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

²Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

Introduction

Unintentional paediatric poisoning (UPP) is a major public health issue worldwide. Lack of caregiver awareness is an identified risk factor for UPP. Determining level and gaps of awareness among mothers is useful in developing prevention strategies.

Objectives

To describe the knowledge about factors related to UPP among mothers and to determine associated maternal factors.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted at the Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital. A random sample of 150 mothers was given an interviewer administered questionnaire and a knowledge score was assigned. Chi square test was used to investigate associations between maternal knowledge and demographic factors.

Results

Study population had a mean age of 32 years with 86.7% having more than primary education. 90.6% had overall knowledge score of >50% and 29.3% had a score >80%. Majority had an adequate knowledge (score >50%) for identification and prevention strategies related to the two most prevalent means of UPP in the developing world, kerosene and pesticides. Knowledge about poisonous plants was poor. 39.3% had a poor level of knowledge (score < 50%) about family factors. Majority believed that children are secure when mother and child are alone at home. 50% did not identify age groups most susceptible for UPP. Overall knowledge score associated significantly with family income ($p < 0.05$) while knowledge score with respect to kerosene, pesticide and medicinal drugs associated significantly with mother's education level ($p < 0.05$). 88% of mothers used reliable media to gain relevant knowledge.

Conclusions

Sri Lankan mothers have satisfactory awareness regarding the two most prevalent types of UPP in SL while they have limited knowledge regarding poisonous plants, medicinal drug poisoning and child/family risk factors for UPP. Practices and attitudes have to be focussed on developing strategies for kerosene and pesticide poisoning prevention. Reliable media and school curriculum are possible media to improve identified deficiencies in awareness.