

SUMMARY

The objective of this descriptive study was to assess the knowledge and attitudes on transfusion transmitted infections and reactions to blood transfusions among recipients of blood.

All patients (205) who received blood in the general medicine and general surgery wards during 4.5.1997 - 17.5.1997 at the National Hospital of Sri-Lanka were included in the study.

Knowledge on transfusion transmitted infections was assessed using a scoring system. Only 5.4% had good knowledge with a majority having fair degree of knowledge (63.9%). The knowledge amongst 29.8% of the subjects were poor. The 5.4% individuals who had a good knowledge had an educational background of A levels or above.

Except for 10.6% in the Grade I-V educational group and 8.2% in the Grade VI-IX group, the rest knew that blood was screened prior to transfusion. However 78% of the recipients who knew that screening prior to transfusion is done believed that screened blood was completely free of risk.

The existing knowledge of transfusion transmitted infections was mainly acquired from newspapers in both males and females (58.9% and 53.9% respectively), but the preferred media for future knowledge in both males and females was the television (79.8% and 63.2% respectively).

Attitude on future transfusions showed that 7.3% of all recipients (45% of those who have studied up to A levels and 80% of those with above A level qualifications) preferred autologous transfusions. 21% of recipients preferred directed donations (from relatives) while the majority (57.1%) did not mind receiving blood from donors unknown to them.

One third of the recipients believed that consent from the patient prior to transfusion was necessary, with higher percentages with the same view in the more educated groups. A statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was observed among those who have studied up to or less than Grade IX and those who have studied up to and above O/Level with regard to preferring written consent (13.3% and 32.7% respectively). The remainder (86.7% of those who have studied up to or less than Grade IX and 67.3% of those who have studied up to or above O Level) stated that verbal consent was adequate. A statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was also observed among males and females with regard to preferring written consent (11.9% and 56% respectively). The remainder (88.1% of the males and 44% of the females) stated that verbal consent was adequate.

Post transfusion reactions were commoner in males (48.8%) than females (27.6%). This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Most common side effects were urticarial rashes, chills and rigors and itching. Nearly half (47.6%) of those individuals who experienced reactions were afraid of a future transfusions.