

ABSTRACT

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out to characterize the victims of physical violence attending to Base Hospital Matale over a period of 19 weeks commencing from 13th of May 2002. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to interview 356 victims of physical violence (2.34% of the total admissions) admitted during the study period. Both the interview and the clinical examination of physical injuries were done by a trained third year medical student.

This group included 291 males (81.7%) with a maximum number of victims in the age group of 21-30 years (31.3%). There were 65 females victims (18.3%) and majority of them were in the age group of 31-40 years (30.8%). The mean age for both males and females was 35 (± 14.5) years. Compared to the ethnic and religious distribution of the total population of the Matale District, Tamils and Hindus had a significantly high proportion among the victims while the Sinhalese and Buddhists had a significantly low proportion ($p < 0.001$). Married persons constituted 56.5% of the study group. Percentages of victims from estate (12.9%) and urban (15.2%) areas were significantly high when compared to the distribution of the whole population according to the area of residence (4.9% & 8.2% respectively) while it was significantly low among the victims from rural areas (71.9% compared to 86.2) ($p < 0.001$). A majority of the victims (42.3%) were involved in elementary occupation while there were only 6.2% of the victims having employments above the clerical level. Almost two-third of the victims (60.9%) had a monthly family income of less than Rs.3000.00. Low level of education was noticed among the victims; 5.3% of the victims had no education, 38.2% had studied up to Grade 5 and another 38.2% had studied up to Grade 10.

Males had been the offender in 94.7% of the times. In 68.3% of the incidents only a single person was involved in the assault. There was no significant difference in the distribution of individual and group violence in relation to the ethnicity and the area of residence ($p>0.05$). A known person(s) was involved in the assault in 88.5% of the times. Individual violence was mainly inflicted by a relative (93.3%) while group violence was commoner among the un-known persons ($\chi^2=42.465$, $df=3$, $p<0.001$). Home (36.5%) and the street (34.8%) were the commonest places for violence and relatives were the offenders in majority of the home violence (48.5%) while majority of the violence in all the other areas had been carried out by other known persons ($\chi^2=97.539$, $df=9$, $p<0.001$). Use of a weapon was the commonest mode of assault (71.1%) followed by punching (18.8%). 31.5% of the victims had been assaulted between 18.01 and 21.00 hours while 22.5% had been assaulted between 15.01 and 18.00 hours.

Head and neck injuries were seen in 66.3% of the victims. Contusions were seen in 55.6% of the victims. Higher number of contusions (37.9%) and lacerations (51.2%) were seen in the head and neck region while abrasions (35.5%), cuts (38.1%) and fractures (44.9%) were mostly seen in the upper limb. Grievous injuries seen in only 16.9% of the victims; 18.9% of the males and 7.7% of the females had sustained grievous injuries and this difference was significant ($\chi^2=4.763$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$). Only 11.2% of the victims were under the influence of alcohol and 50.6% of the victims claimed that their offenders were seemed to be under the influence of alcohol.