

ABSTRACT

DM is a non communicable disease, being increasingly recognized as a major threat to public health around the world. Patients' knowledge, practices and the health services provided to them become critical ingredients in the control of this incurable disease, prevention of complications and the improvement of quality of life of the patients.

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted at the Provincial General Hospital of Ratnapura, with the objective of re-searching into the knowledge and practices on the prevention of complications of DM among diabetic patients attending the medical clinics and the services that were provided to them. A total of 385 diagnosed diabetic patients were interviewed using a questionnaire that was pretested. In addition, a checklist was utilized to collect information on the facilities that were available at the hospital.

The respondents' knowledge on basic facts regarding blood sugar control showed mixed results. Most of the socio demographic factors showed a statistically significant association with almost all the areas questioned on various aspects of blood sugar control. The knowledge on the increased risks for foot ulceration and amputation was almost universal but knowledge on the other chronic complications was unsatisfactory. The knowledge on the occurrence of almost all chronic complications was seen to be statistically significant with many socio demographic factors. The respondents' awareness of the risk factors for the development of complications was far from satisfactory. Other than for uncontrolled blood sugar and disease duration, the patients

didn't understand adequately, the risks posed by the other factors. The statistical association seen with the socio demographic factors varied with the different risk factors.

Other than for monthly clinic follow-up and daily use of medication, the patients were not adhering to some of the practices that were pivotal in the prevention of chronic complications. Almost all socio demographic factors showed a statistically significant association with most of the reported practices.

Having most of the facilities necessary to provide the standard care to the patients, it was seen that the health care delivered was below the level expected from a Provincial General Hospital. Important aspects of patient education recommended by the authorities, was not provided. Recommended examinations and the investigations available for the disease control and screening for chronic complications were not made proper use of. Economic reasons and occupational obligations were quoted by the non-compliers as being the main reasons for non-adherence of health education provided.

Time has come for the health care providers to reorganize the health services and improve the quality of care delivered to the diabetics, maximally using the existing resources. All the health institutions should have a clear policy on the management of the diabetics, adopting the national guidelines. These policies and guidelines must be implemented by improving the awareness of its staff time and again in addition to adequate supervision. In addition, a referral system, utilizing all government health institutions in the district makes a lot of sense in improving the delivery of health care.