

## SUMMARY

The objective of the present study was to describe the profile and disability status among knee osteoarthritic patients attending the Rheumatology clinic at Teaching Hospital Colombo South. The patient profile was considered under the following dimensions; selected demographic and socio-economic characteristics, treatment seeking behaviour and out-of-pocket expenditure.

A clinic based descriptive cross-sectional design was used. All patients meeting eligibility criteria who attended the clinic during the period of data collection from 1st of September 2008, were included till required sample size was achieved. Total number of participants interviewed was 387. Two structured interviewer administered questionnaire were used for data collection. The Health Assessment Questionnaire-8 item disability index was used after modifications in the assessment of disability. Statistical analysis was done using the PSPP package (open source version of the SPSS package). Univariate analysis was done to describe the study population, treatment seeking behaviour and the treatment related out of pocket expenditure. Bivariate analysis was done to elicit the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Largest proportion of patients belonged to 55-64 year age group. Proportion of males as well as the ethnic and religious minority groups were low among the clinic patients. Currently married, represented three fourth of the group while majority were never employed. Further, nearly half of the patients had a per-capita monthly income below the official poverty line of the Colombo district.

Only 79.1% of the total sample had received some form of medical treatment during preceding 12 month period prior to their first visit to the Rheumatology clinic at THCS. Since 66.4% of them had two or more treatment modalities, existence of medical pluralism in treatment seeking for OA knee is evident. Tendency to remain in the same modality was observed though patients had

changed the service provider. Western government sector ranked as number one preferred treatment modality among patients presented within 12 months of onset of initial symptoms in all four steps concerned.

OOP expenses were incurred by 99.5% of the total study population whereas a considerable proportion (47.0%) incurred OOP expenses on medicine. Even though medicine is claimed to be provided free of charge in the government health sector the highest observed median was also on this category.

Patients with following characteristics had incurred a higher OOP expenditure in this study; age between 45-54 years, male sex, higher educational attainment, employed at present, per capita monthly family income above poverty line and higher level of disability.

In this study the DI for the whole group is 1.057 (sd=0.396). Only 1.3% belonged to the severe to very severe disability group (DI 2-3), where as majority (59.9%) came under the mild to moderate category (DI 0-1). The mean DI was highest for the functional category concerned with ability to squat (MDI=2.021).

The present study had identified following characteristics as having statistically significant association with the severity of functional disability in patients with OA of knees: age, sex, occupational physical activities and time lag between onset of initial symptoms to 1<sup>st</sup> clinic visit.

According to the findings of the current study following are some of the recommendations made: possibility of distributing of health educational reading material among clinic attendees to educate them on the disease and improve compliance; rectification of discrepancy between prescribed drugs and what is available at the hospital pharmacy to minimize OOP expenditure on prescribed medicine; structural modifications at home, work place and public places considering most affected functional categories.

**Key words: osteoarthritis, treatment modality, out-of-pocket expenses, disability index**