

ABSTRACT

Hypertension is a chronic disease and a public health problem. It is a non communicable disease that has reached epidemic proportions worldwide with the demographic transition of populations. Worldwide prevalence estimates for hypertension may be as much as 1 billion individuals, and approximately 7.1 million deaths per year may be attributable to hypertension. Effective control of hypertension and its complications heavily depend on patient's knowledge, attitudes and practices. To achieve the optimum level of disease control and to reduce the premature morbidity and mortality due to hypertension, individual should have a sound knowledge, positive attitudes and good practices like regular treatment, healthy life styles and dietary habits and avoidance of other risk factors.

So far researches done on hypertension were focused mainly on clinical and treatment aspects only. Researches on knowledge, attitudes and practices on management of hypertension got less attention and still very little literature has been published in Sri Lanka in relation to the above three aspects although these factors play a major role in patient's compliance and thus disease control. This research was employed with the purpose of researching in to knowledge, attitudes and practices of hypertensive patients who were attending to medical clinics at the General Hospital Kalutara.

This cross sectional study was used to achieve above objectives using a pretested interviewer administered questionnaire as the study instrument. The study population consisted of all the patients with essential hypertension, attending to medical clinics irrespective of them having other medical conditions. A sample of 400 mentally sound adult medical clinic attendees who were selected using systematic sampling was interviewed during the period of 19/07/2010 to 30/08/2010 by three interviewers. The response rate was 100%. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Chi square test was used to test the associations between variables.

The respondents had sound knowledge about the need for regular medication, complications and on modifiable risk factors although in some aspects level of knowledge was lacking. Their knowledge was poor related to identification of nephropathy as a complication of hypertension and obesity and not consuming fresh fruits and vegetables as risk factors for the development of complications of hypertension..

Majority of respondents had favourable attitudes on control of diet, importance of regular treatment, regular check ups and exercises, onset of complications of hypertension and harmful effect of excessive amount of alcohol. Attitudes regarding delaying of complications with regular medications, harmful effects of smoking and dealing with a happy life despite having hypertension were unfavourable among majority.

Vast majority was regular clinic attendees and compliant with treatment while majority was getting their blood pressure measured regularly. Majority had done investigations like serum cholesterol, ECG, and blood sugar as required but not for renal functions. Majority was using television as their main source of information regarding management of hypertension.

Associated factors like duration after diagnosis, Presence of other diseases in addition to hypertension and Presence of hypertension in other family members had statistically significant association with some components of knowledge, attitudes and practices of respondents.

Effective education and communication strategies targeting for improving patient's knowledge, attitudes and practices through behavioural changes should be adopted. Good collaboration of curative sector with preventive sector at village level in order to deliver comprehensive care for the patients at individual level will ensure patient's regular follow up and effective management of the disease.

Findings of the study may be useful in policy making at local level and for the health care providers to make necessary steps in care giving.

The results and techniques used in this study may be useful in to a research which may study about patients with hypertension in the community who are not followed up at government medical clinics.

Key-words

- Knowledge, attitudes and practices related to hypertension
- Patients with hypertension
- Medical clinics