

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to describe the knowledge and attitudes towards Oral Rehydration Salts among a rural population in Sri Lanka. The sources of information available to the community on Oral Rehydration Salts were elicited. The knowledge attitudes and practices of the health workers in this area in the management of childhood diarrhoea were also studied.

A sample of 600 randomly selected mothers using the cluster sampling technique and all the health care providers in the categories of Medical Officers, Ayurvedhic Practitioners and Public Health Midwives were interviewed.

It was found that there was widespread awareness of ORS among the mothers in this area. The educational level of the mother was significantly associated with her knowledge regarding ORS. There was no significant cultural barrier to the acceptance of Oral Rehydration Solution. The Public Health Midwife emerged as the chief informant on ORS to most mothers. Partial or total suspension of solid foods during diarrhoea was a common practice adopted by 67% of mothers and 66% health care providers. The educational level of the mother was associated with proper feeding practices during diarrhoea. Awareness, that malnutrition could be a serious consequence of diarrhoea was lacking among 72% of the health care providers. ORS was used in the management of diarrhoea by almost all health care providers although there were different opinions about the procedures followed in it's use in the treatment of dehydration.

This study also highlights the need to integrate nutrition education and diarrhoeal management programmes.