



ABSTRACT

This study on hypertension was carried out to assess (a) its prevalence, (b) level of screening, (c) knowledge, attitude, practices and (d) selected risk factors in a rural community in the district of Matale.

Using a multi-stage random sampling technique, a sample of 510 Sinhalese persons aged 35 years and above were selected from 5 Grama Niladhari areas in the Divisional Secretary area of Matale. Of the 510 individuals, 97.5% participated in the survey.

The prevalence of hypertension among the subjects was 17.3%, it being higher among the males (19.7%) as compared to females (15.8%).

Nearly 83.3% of the subjects had been screened previously for hypertension, it being significantly higher for females (92.4%) as compared to the males (68.9%), while only half of the subjects (48.9%) had their blood pressures measured during the past one year, once again being significantly higher among the women (55.3%) as compared to the men (33.9%). There was a significantly higher percentage among the age group 50 years and above (53.1%) as compared to the younger age group of 35 - 49 years (42.3%).

Of the hypertensives, only 29.1% were aware that they had hypertension. 88.0% of the known hypertensives were on

treatment for hypertension, while only 28.0% had their blood pressures controlled at the time of the survey.

The use of non-pharmacological methods in controlling hypertension among the known hypertensives was poor; 36.0% were on regular exercise and 48.0% reported a reduction of salt intake.

Overall, 76.3% of the sample had an adequate knowledge on hypertension, especially among the 35-49 year age group, among the married, among the educated and among the high income group.

A satisfactory attitude towards hypertension was found among 91.4% of the sample, it being especially so among the age group 35-49 years, and among the educated groups.

Significantly higher mean Systolic Blood Pressure (SBP) and Diastolic Blood Pressure (DBP) values and significantly higher prevalence of hypertension were seen among the following groups: (a) those aged 50 years and above, (b) widowed/separated/divorced group and (c) those with Body Mass Index (BMI) values of greater than 25 kg/m².

Among males, the prevalence of smoking (66.3%) and regular alcohol consumption (53.9%) were high. The prevalence of obesity in the entire sample was only 7.2%.

The findings of this survey show that hypertension is a significant health problem in the area. The current screening practices in detecting hypertensives are inadequate and also the treatment and control status of hypertension among the hypertensives are inadequate. Other

than a disease oriented programme to prevent and control hypertension, it is also important to implement factor oriented programmes, e.g. anti-smoking, alcohol, diet, physical exercise etc. in order to prevent and control non-communicable diseases. This study also highlights the importance of an interventional programme to improve the knowledge and attitude towards the disease of hypertension among the general population.