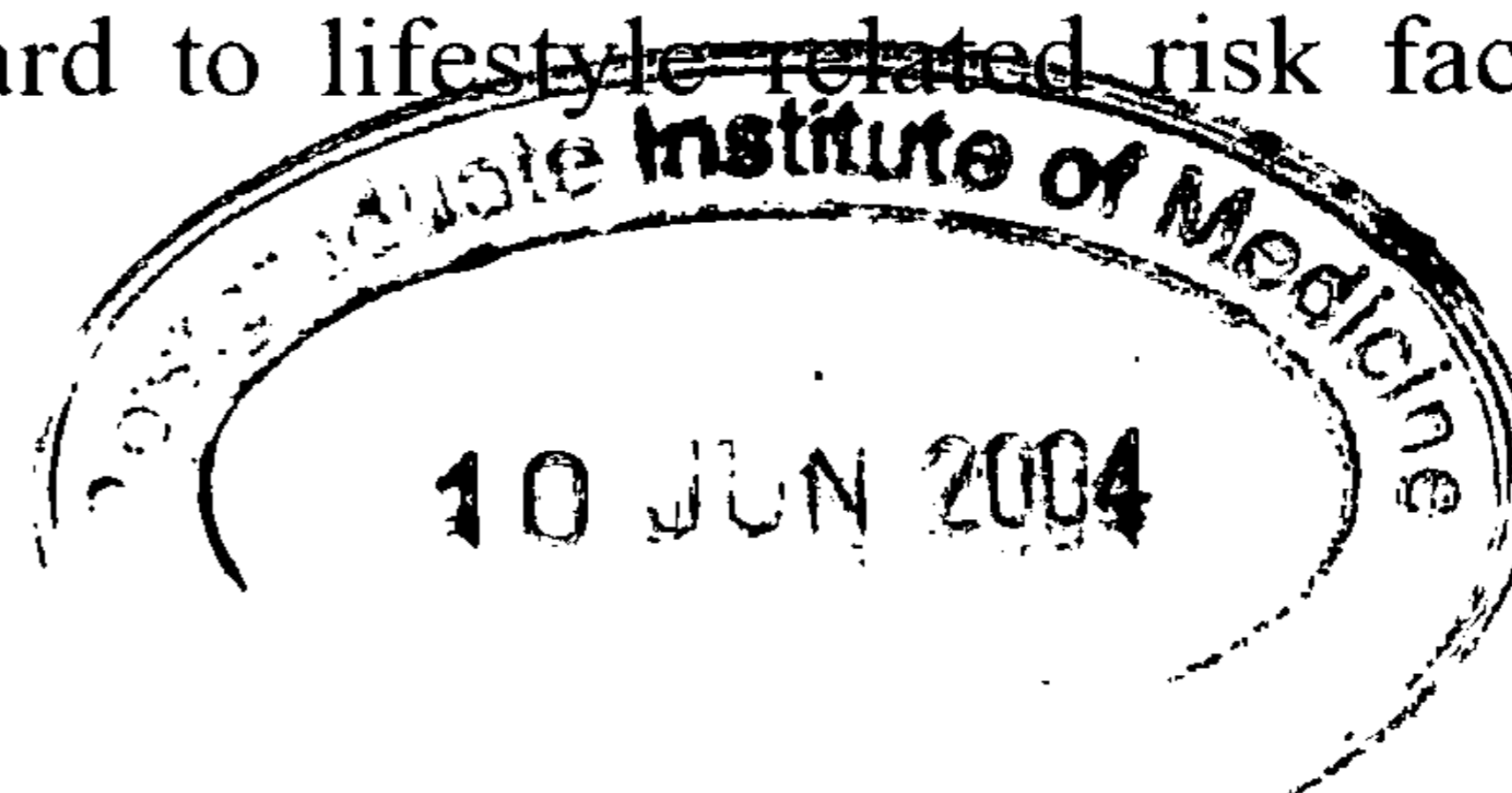


Abstract

Recent disease trends in Sri Lanka show that there is an increase in Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) due to high prevalence of life style related risk factors such as unhealthy dietary habits, obesity, physical inactivity, alcohol and tobacco consumption and stress.

Aim of the present study was to explore the distribution of unhealthy life style related risk factors among teachers in Kegalle MOH area and to assess their level of knowledge with regard to life style related risk factors and NCDs. Teachers being educators and role models are a responsible target group in formulating knowledge, attitude, and habits about healthy lifestyles among school children. Hence, assessing their knowledge and practices with regard to lifestyle related risk factors is very important.



A sample of 400 teachers were selected using simple random sampling method and excluding those who already had NCDs. Study instruments used were self administered questionnaire and anthropometrical measurements. Study group consisted mainly of Sinhalese 98.2%. When considering dietary habits, higher proportion of teachers consumes less than five portions of fruits and vegetables per day. Similarly 20.5% of the study group had poor dietary habits where as only 10.8% had a good dietary score. Rest was in the "need improvement" group.

The obese and overweight percentage of males and females were 33.3% and 28.9% respectively. Males were physically more active than females. None of the females

smoked where as 31.4% of male respondents were current smokers. Female drinkers were only 1.4%. However, out of males, 67.5% were current drinkers. Yet, only 5.8% were moderate or heavy drinkers. Majority of the sample (66.3%) had no stress at all. The sample had high level of knowledge (63%) regarding lifestyle related risk factors and NCDs and 35.3% had fair knowledge and 1.8% had poor knowledge.

In conclusion, though teachers are a well-educated group, unhealthy dietary habits and obesity were high among them. Furthermore, the numbers who consciously engaged in physical exercise was low and even among those who practice exercise, majority engaged in only mild exercise. Though, among male teachers smoking prevalence was very much lower than general population, alcohol consumption, consumed at a lower level, was still quite high. A positive factor was that job related stress was very low among teachers.

The lifestyle habits and knowledge on lifestyle related diseases among teachers are important because they help to form eating habits of school children, which can in turn last a lifetime. Hence it is recommended that giving skills to teachers on selection intake of proper nutritious food, to engage in physical exercise and to make supportive environment for non smoking and non alcohol consumption will help to improve the lifestyle of not only the present generation but of the future generation too.