

Abstract

Background: Provision of Essential Medicines is one of the elements in the primary health care package. Pharmaceuticals play a crucial role in preventive and curative health care. The important factor that determines the effectiveness of a health care system is the availability of drugs. Sri Lanka, being a low-middle income country with free health care services will not be able to withstand an ever increasing pharmaceuticals bill for its health services. The expenditure on drugs has been increasing each year because of the increased demand for better services, escalating unit cost on drugs, changing pattern of morbidity. Among the many factors leading to non availability of drugs in hospitals, lack of proper supply chain management of pharmaceuticals cuts across many of these reasons. DRC plays a major role in the supply chain management of pharmaceuticals in the health care institutions.

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of supply chain management of pharmaceuticals in base hospitals in Ampara district

Study Design: Cross sectional descriptive study

Study Setting and participants: The entire members of Drug Review Committee including all the prescribing officers in all the seven base hospitals in Ampara district were enlisted in the study. The total sample for this study was 240 after using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected through self administered questionnaire, perusal of documents related to supply chain management of pharmaceuticals, interviews using structured interview schedule and observation of drug stores using a check list.

Results: Total initial study sample was 240. The response rate for this study was 95.8%. Majority of the study participants (50.9%) were in age group ranging from 31 years to 40 years and most (36.1%) had 6 years to 10 years of service in the Department of Health. Interestingly 36.5 % of the participants had 4 years to 6 years in the current posts. It was found that DRC meetings were not conducted monthly. The maximum number of drug review committee meetings held in the year 2009 was only six and active participation of the members of the drug review committees was found to be inadequate. Lack of training on the management of drugs found to be one of the contributing factors for the ineffectiveness of supply chain. Only 9.1 % of respondents had received adequate training. Among the respondents only 24.3 % have gained basic knowledge on the drug review committee and on the management of drugs. Generally the knowledge was inadequate in all age groups. Majority (69.1%) of respondents had negative attitude towards Supply Chain Management. Most of the respondents (71.8%) have not used the reference book for the management of drugs in the public sector. Non availability, excess, quality failure and spoiled drugs cause major problems from time to time in every institution. These institutions do not receive the drugs during the first quarter and in some second quarter also. Documentation related to the management of drugs, regular supervision and test checks found to be highly inadequate in the study institutions. The basic infrastructure facilities and staff availability at the institutional drugs stores were not satisfactory although the proper storage of drugs is essential to ensure efficacy, safety, quality, accountability and availability up to their point of use. There is a vacuum area for Medical Administrators to make use of their knowledge and skills to improve these conditions.