

Abstract

The curative health services in the state sector in Sri Lanka are consisted of national, provincial, general, base hospitals and a widely- spread network of divisional hospitals. Laboratory services are main component of diagnosis and management of patients of these institutions. Effective and efficient utilization of available public and private laboratory services is yet to be explored in Sri Lanka. So this study was planned to describe the availability and utilization pattern of laboratory results at medical wards in North Colombo Teaching Hospital of Sri Lanka. The specific Objectives are to describe the requesting pattern, availability and utilization pattern of laboratory results in medical wards and to determine the completeness, timeliness of the available laboratory results.

This prospective study observed the patient management for a month, and informants were medical officers, nursing officers, medical laboratory technologists (MLTT) in the medical wards and laboratories. Random sampling method used to select 424 of participants. This number was proportionately obtained from each seven wards according to their monthly admissions. Two types of study instruments: interviewer administered questionnaire for medical ward and laboratory staff, and check list to assess laboratory findings were used for the data collection. Statistical package of Epi-Info and SPSS were used for data entry and analysis.

The results showed, only 75% investigation results were available for patients' management while they were in the wards and balance was delayed or absent. While 67.4% of investigations were requested by intern medical officers, 80% of inward

patients were tested with 05 or more investigations. Average number of 6.2 investigations was carried out per patient. Eighty percent of urgent and routine requests were made within 24hours of admission. Majority (85%) requests were routine investigations. Only 60% laboratory investigations have been used to diagnose the patients before discharge. Printed laboratory results were 1.6 times more user friendly than the hand written results. The mean time of result availability to the ward was nine hours for routine and six hours for urgent requests.

Improving the coordination, communication and team work between wards and laboratories is important to efficient and effective utilization of investigations.