

112
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Abstract

Objective

The aim of this study was to assess the extent to which the adults in Thamankaduwa Medical Officer of Health area use Alternative medicines in the treatment of oral conditions. The main reasons for using Alternative medicines / Western type dental services, and the awareness of the public regarding Alternative medicines in the treatment of oral conditions were also assessed.

Study design

A sample of 603 adults above 45 years of age were selected using a two stage cluster sampling with probability proportionate to size (PPS) technique, from 22 Public Health Midwife areas of Thamankaduwa MOH area. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data.

Results

Of the total sample 89.4% had obtained treatment from health services (either Western type or Alternative Medicine) for their oral conditions. Nearly 18% of subjects had obtained Alternative Medicines as treatments for their oral conditions.

Use of chewing stick by 7% of subjects was an interesting finding. Also salt water was used by 42% of the subjects as a mouth rinse.

Of all socio-demographic variables considered, the use of Alternative medicine for the treatment of oral conditions varied significantly with age. ($P < 0.001$)

Of the total sample 12.8% had used Ayurveda and 4.5% had used other Traditional types of medicine such as Yanthra/Manthra for their oral conditions. Siddha medicine and

Acupuncture were not utilized by any of the subjects. Alternative medicines were mainly obtained for toothache. .

More than half of the subjects (56.4%), had used Home remedies for oral conditions.

Among the main reasons given by the subjects who used Alternative Medicines for their oral conditions, "faith in Traditional medicine" was stated by majority of the subjects. A majority (20%)of subjects who used dental services (Western type) had stated "easy obtain ability" as the main reason.

The subjects were mainly aware of toothache and gum disease as oral conditions .Also 74% and 17% were aware of the fact that home remedies and Ayurvedic medicines are available for toothache.