

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Dengue fever is one of the common mosquito-borne diseases that cause a wide range of symptoms from acute febrile illness to death in tropical and sub-tropical countries. Preparedness, knowledge, and attitudes of medical and nursing officers who are the first line healthcare staff in managing dengue outbreaks are not yet well known across the country and concern is varied in context and place. Therefore, it is important to assess the preparedness, knowledge, and attitudes of medical and nursing officers in managing dengue outbreaks.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to assess preparedness, knowledge, and attitudes in managing dengue outbreaks of medical and nursing officers at the Colombo East Base Hospital.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the preparedness, knowledge, and attitudes in managing dengue outbreaks among medical officers and nursing officers. All medical officers and nursing officers working in medical wards, PCU and OPD at Colombo East Base Hospital were included in the study. Medical and nursing officers who were on long leave, who were working in surgical, obstetrics, gynecology and intensive care units were excluded from the study. A pretested selfadministered questionnaire was used to collect the data. Preparedness of the hospital to manage a dengue outbreak was assessed using an observational checklist administered by the principal investigator. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software and presented as frequency distributions. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Post Graduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo.

Results

The response rate was 94.1% (96/102). Most of the study participants belonged to the age group of 31-40 years (n=49, 51%) and were females (n=75, 78.1%). A majority of the medical officers (n=15, 39.5%) were attached to the outpatient department and half of the nursing officers (n=29) were attached to the medical ward. A majority of medical officers (n=35, 92.1%) and nursing officers (n=48, 82.8%) scored 50 or more in total knowledge score. However, some gaps existed related to the incubation period of the dengue virus and the monitoring of the patients during the febrile phase. Most of the study participants disagreed that currently available ward facilities in the hospital are adequate to manage dengue outbreaks (n=43, 44.8%), currently available staff in the hospital is sufficient to manage dengue outbreak situations (n=53, 55.2%), sufficient to have training programs only during the outbreak situations (n=80, 83.3%) and participating in clean-up activities in the hospital is an obstacle for duties (n=38, 39.6%).

Ninety-three study participants (96.3%) were capable to manage dengue according to the National Dengue Guidelines, while 63 (67.7%) said that they have not been trained on dengue management. The study revealed that medical wards do not have enough beds for the patients (90% of bed availability), while pediatric wards do not have adequate monitors (57.7% availability). Conducting routine investigations such as packed cell volume and liver function tests are satisfactory; yet, full blood count takes much more time compared to the expected time. Notifications of the dengue cases through DenSys were not done.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the study revealed that the study participants did not have enough training on dengue management. Therefore, conducting continuous professional development programs and in-service training programs targeting dengue management is useful to improve knowledge and skills among medical and nursing officers in dengue management. Timely notifications of dengue cases through DenSys should be done.

Keywords: Dengue, Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, Preparedness