

ABSTRACT

Background: Medical laboratory technologists are at risk of numerous occupational hazards. Hence their awareness of occupational hazards and safety practices is of utmost importance.

Objective: To describe the self-reported occupational safety practices and to assess the level of awareness and its associated factors on occupational hazards and safety practices among medical laboratory technologists working in government tertiary care health institutions in Colombo district

Methods: The cross-sectional study design was chosen. A census was carried out recruiting all the eligible medical laboratory technologists (n=358) currently employed during the data collection period in all the government tertiary care health institutions in Colombo district. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Associates of the awareness level were determined using the odds ratio and the chi-square test placing the significance level at 0.05.

Results: Out of 358 medical laboratory technologists, 326 responded giving a response rate of 91.1%. The majority of the respondents had satisfactory level awareness of occupational hazards and safety practices (57.4%, n=187). Association between the awareness level and the socio-demographic characteristics was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$). The experience of the respondents at the current station revealed a statistically significant association with the awareness level ($p=0.047$). When only the respondents who had received any training on occupational safety were analyzed, a statistically significant association was revealed between the awareness level and the number of training sessions participated ($p=0.039$). Other occupation-related factors did not reveal significant associations with the awareness level ($p>0.05$). The majority of the participants had good laboratory safety practices. However, documentation of occupational injuries was not satisfactory. The highest proportion of respondents had perceived that heavy workload as a barrier for better practice of occupational safety.

Conclusions: The majority had satisfactory level awareness of occupational hazards and safety practices. Although the majority of the participants had reported good laboratory safety practices, record maintenance on occupational injuries within the laboratories was seemed to be inadequate.

Recommendation: Occupational safety and health of the medical laboratory technologists should be prioritized, further strengthened and regularly monitored at the institutional level.

Keywords: Medical laboratory technologists, awareness, occupational hazards, occupational safety practices