ABSTRACT

Introduction

Cutaneous leishmaniasis (CL) is an emerging communicable disease in Sri Lanka. It is a notifiable disease and therefore, included in the disease surveillance system. Well-trained Public health inspectors on CL and its preventive measures are critical to ensure control of the disease.

Objectives

To describe knowledge, attitudes, preventive practices of cutaneous leishmaniasis at the community level and factors associated among Public Health Inspectors (PHII) in Southern Province.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 238 Public Health Inspectors in Southern Province, which reported as leishmaniasis endemic province. Self-administrated questionnaires were filled by the participants in the presence of the investigator. SPSS version 21 was used for the data analysis. Chi-squared test with the 0.05 significant level was used to analyze factors associated with knowledge, attitudes and preventive practices of PHII.

Results

Majority of PHII were Sinhala 99.6 %(237) and Buddhist 98.3 %(234). Of them, 67.2 % (160) were well aware of the agent of the disease and 97.5 %(232) identified that the bite of infected sand flies as the mode of transmission. The majority 96.2 %(229) knew the cattle, dogs as animal reservoirs of the disease. Only 21 %(50) knew the seasonal pattern of the disease. From the respondents, 88.7 %(211) identified skin as the commonest affected site of the body. Nearly 90% were aware that the substandard houses and outdoor working as risk exposure factors of CL. Many of them 85.3 %(203) believed that the timely investigation of CL is important. However, nearly 80% perceived that they should prioritize

fieldwork on dengue than CL as its increased fatality and periodic outbreaks. Nearly 75% completed field investigation of CL within 7 days and did follow up visits of diseased to ensure treatment-seeking behavior. Only 48.7 %(116) of them advised the CL patient to cover the lesion to control the transmission. Work experience in CL endemic districts, supportive supervisions, and in-service training were significantly associated (p=<0.001) with knowledge of the PHII. In-service training and overall preventive practice levels had a significant association (p=<0.001). The overall knowledge levels and attitude levels of PHII had a significant association (P=<0.001) with the levels of preventive practices.

Conclusions and recommendations

Even though more than half of the PHII had good knowledge and attitudes on CL, the overall levels of preventive practice were poor. Therefore, it can be further improved by inservice training, supportive supervisions and distributing practical guidelines on CL.

Keywords : Cutaneous leishmaniasis, Public Health Inspectors, Southern Province