

Abstract

Introduction

Excessive exposure to sun is a common hazard that school children and teachers face in their routine day to day life. Teachers and students do a lot of outdoor activities, athletic and sport practices in open play grounds exposing them to hot sun. Excessive exposure to direct sun can cause increase in the core temperature of the body and lead to severe dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke (sun stroke), heat cramps and skin burn. Several studies are done on the knowledge, attitude and practices of general public on exposure to sun and its effects worldwide, but less information is available on research among school teachers and students in Sri Lanka.

Objective

The current study is aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices on excessive exposure to sun among secondary school teachers of Velanai and Kayts MOH areas, which are in dry climatic zones of Sri Lanka.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in the study period of May 2016 to December 2016 among secondary school teachers from 31 schools in the islands of Northern Province. Self-administered questionnaire in the local language and English distributed among them to answer; and the responses were analysed statistically. The questionnaire comprised of 24 questions has 4 sets of questions namely on socio-demography, knowledge, attitude and practices. The information sheet which was in English and local language of Tamil contains details about the research and the principal investigator; and written informed consent obtained.

Results

The specially designed self-administered questionnaires were distributed among 290 secondary school teachers, and 222 questionnaires were completed, returned and included in the analysis corresponding to 76.6% of response rate. Among the participants included almost equal gender distribution noted; and the male population showed better awareness in

identifying heat stroke as a medical emergency. Educational levels of participants seen from GCE ordinary level up to Post graduate level and above. It is observed that teachers with university education are knowledgeable enough to recognise heat stroke as medical emergency, than other groups. Only little above half of the participant's KAP was adequate on the topic. A significant portion of participants have poor knowledge, attitude and practices on effects of excessive exposure to sun and increased ambient temperature

Conclusions and recommendations:

Overall prevalence of ignorance, poor sun safe practices and negative attitudes were noted among teachers from the study.

School teachers of Velanai and Kayts MOH areas, need education on identifying sunstroke as a medical emergency, irrespective of their educational level or gender.

School teachers of Velanai and Kayts MOH areas need to be trained in giving first aid and identifying heat related illnesses irrespective of their educational level or gender.

Creating better awareness on morbidity and mortality secondary to excessive exposure to sun may help in improving the attitude towards the hazard.