

ABSTRACT

Climate change poses serious threats to human health and well-being. It affects all areas of human existence. It threatens the basic foundations of public health, namely safe drinking water, sufficient food, secure shelters and good social conditions. Climate change contributes to increase the global burden of disease, deaths and disability through multiple pathways. It could also give rise to disaster situations such as floods, draughts and storms with resultant effects on human health and existence. Socio-economic disruption due to disaster events will also give rise to variety of health effects.

As well recognized social leaders, doctors need to be sensitized on the problem of climate change which affects all aspects of health of mankind in many direct and indirect ways including increase frequency and magnitude of disasters.

Up to present, there are no studies undertaken in Sri Lanka to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices on climate change and its effects among doctors. Even in other countries, there were only few studies on the subject in comparison to other areas of knowledge. It is of paramount importance that doctors who are the cream of the health workforce should have adequate knowledge and correct attitudes and practices regarding climate change. Then only they would be able to enlighten, advice and advocate the policy makers as well as the general public on the need for improvements in the health sector to respond adequately to the challenges posed by the climate change.

A descriptive cross-sectional study among grade medical officers attached to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), Colombo on knowledge, attitudes and practices on climate change and its effects on humans was conducted with the objective of describing the knowledge, sources of knowledge, attitudes and practices on climate change and its effects on humans

among medical officers attached to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), Colombo and to recommend methods to improve their knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding climate change. A randomly selected sample of 404 grade medical officers were enrolled for the study using a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire. (Data collectors, who were Pre-Intern medical officers, waited with each respondent till the questionnaire was completed)

The knowledge of climate change and its effects on humans among the participant grade medical officers were good. But there were some areas which need to improve.

Television is the most preferred medium in which the participant doctors obtain information on climate change.

All the participant medical officers are rightfully concerned about the fact that Sri Lanka is affected by the climate change. Majority of the participant doctors have a correct and good attitude about their roles and responsibilities with relevance to the effects of climate change.

The most favoured action of the respondent medical officers in reducing climate change is the proper waste disposal.

Provisions to encourage the reading of scientific journals and books by the medical officers by way of providing scientific journals and selected books in the hospital premises itself, inclusion of climate change and its effects in all Continuous Medical Educational(CME) programmes conducted by all professional medical organizations and in the postgraduate courses in all disciplines conducted by the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine(PGIM), provision and arrangement of a scheme of incentives to medical officers who take part in certain number of CME programmes per year by way of salary increments etc. can be recommended from the findings of this study