

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Sri Lanka is a country with high endemicity of leptospirosis associated mainly with paddy cultivation. Despite rigorous preventive activities undertaken, the case burden continued to rise. Hence it is time to evaluate the knowledge, attitude, and practices on preventive measures and healthcare-seeking and associated factors among farmers to generate the evidence needed.

Objective

To describe the knowledge, attitude and practices of preventive measures, healthcare-seeking behaviour and associated factors in leptospirosis among farmers in the Medical Officer of Health area Pelmadulla.

Methods

A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted among 426 farmers chosen using the cluster sampling method in Pelmadulla MOH area. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used after pre-testing. The knowledge, attitude and practices scores were calculated using SPSS software and frequencies were described. Factors associated were analyzed using odds ratios and chi-square test to assess the statistical significance at level $P < 0.05$.

Results

Majority (81.9%) had good knowledge and 72.8%(n=310) had good attitude but only 16.4%(n=70) had good practices score on leptospirosis preventive measures. Similarly, 66%(n=281) had good knowledge and 50% (n=213) had good attitude on healthcare seeking but only, 25.1%(n=107) had good practices on healthcare seeking behaviour in leptospirosis. Knowledge on preventive practices (OR = 5.8, 95% CI = 1.7 – 19.1, $P = < 0.001$), having a family member who had history of leptospirosis infection (OR = 2.5, 95% CI = 1.06 - 6.2, $P = 0.03$) and good education level (OR = 2.1, 95% CI = 1.1 – 3.9, $p=0.015$) were significantly associated with the preventive practices in leptospirosis and knowledge on healthcare seeking behaviours (OR = 4.6, 95% CI = 2.5 - 8.4, $P = < 0.0001$), duration engaged in paddy farming (OR = 1.8, 95% CI = 1.03 – 3.3, $P = 0.035$) and distance to the nearest public health institution (OR = 0.15, 95% CI = 0.03 – 0.63, $P = 0.003$) were the factors which had significant association with healthcare seeking behaviour.

Conclusion and recommendations

Knowledge and attitude on leptospirosis prevention and health-seeking were satisfactory, though practices were poor. Need behaviour modification focused awareness for changing practices for preventive measures and healthcare-seeking.

Keywords: leptospirosis, preventive practices, healthcare-seeking-behaviour