

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health facilities are among the workplaces with the most hazardous agents that demand strict compliance with occupational health and safety standards. Healthcare workers are at potential risk of harm from exposure to numerous hazardous agents encountered in their workplace. Developing and implementing occupational health safety and well-being programs for healthcare workers is important; surveillance is a key component. Surveillance of occupational hazards, incidents and outcomes has become pivotal for formulating preventive and control strategies as well as monitoring and evaluating strategies and service planning. There was no proper occupational surveillance system for healthcare workers operating at Base Hospital in the Kegalle district and the existing surveillance mechanism was deemed inefficient and ineffective too. In view of this, a pilot project was commenced to introduce an occupational surveillance system among healthcare workers in the Kegalle district.

The planning phase included basic research with mixed methods to identify the deficiencies in the existing occupational incident reporting system. Interventions were developed based on inputs from self-administered questionnaires, FGDs, KIIs, and secondary data and arriving consensus at consultative meetings of experts and stakeholders.

Subsequently, a novel occupational surveillance system was introduced and implemented at three Base hospitals in the Kegalle district. Continuous awareness was given to the hospital staff. The interventions were executed over a period of three months from November 2022 to January 2023 following which, a project evaluation was carried out to assess the performance of the project.

The occupational incident reporting mechanism had many deficiencies as perceived by the key stakeholders during FDGs and KIIs. It included a lack of a comprehensive system, no feedback and credibility, underreporting, and a lack of awareness. Intervention strategies were developed to address those deficiencies. Interventions included the development of structure, process, data management and the awareness of staff. The research project was evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively. The perceptions and satisfaction and awareness of the occupational surveillance system of healthcare workers were significantly improved by the intervention. Eighteen reported occupational incidents data quality was assessed, and completeness and timeliness were 100% and the accuracy was more than 95%

In conclusion, the novel occupational surveillance system introduced and implemented at Base Hospitals in the Kegalle district was deemed efficient and effective in terms of the assessed indicators. Further studies are warranted at different service levels prior to expanding it to other service categories and healthcare settings in a stepwise manner to capture the island-wide occupational health-related data. A sustainable occupational health surveillance system is crucial for strengthen the national occupational health program for healthcare workers.

Key Words: Occupational Surveillance System, Hazards, Incidents, Outcomes