

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Communicable diseases are easily transmissible from one person to another and favouring increased transmission in disaster situations due to environmental factors and population risk factors such as congestion, hygienic and sanitation.

In the recent past Sri Lanka has faced many natural and human- made disasters compared to the past. With changing weather patterns, industrial and technological advancement in Sri Lanka further favours negative outcomes of communicable disease outbreaks during disaster situations. Kalutara district is being one of the most natural disaster affected area such as floods and landslides in recent past, is considered as a risk prone area and it is also an important district to improve peoples' behaviours and practices on communicable disease prevention and control in disasters.

Communicable diseases are easily emerge and tend to spread in any disaster situations as the environment created in disasters are usually favouring the emergence and spread of communicable diseases.

In any natural or human-made disaster situations, people are affected and suffering in finding ways to normalize life styles. If the affected people are unaware of how to prevent communicable diseases and what to do in such situations, they will end up with double burden in disasters. Since the health care cost is borne by the government and the responsibility of health care provision is also borne by the government, it is utmost important to be ready in preventing communicable diseases in disaster situations to reduce the unnecessary health care cost which could be prevented through readiness in advance.

In fact the study aimed to identify the gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters and the factors associated with those aspects that would help to improve provision of health care services in more effective manner.



Objectives

This study aimed to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices and associated factors on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters, among hospital attendees in out-patient department in General Hospital-Kalutara. The study specifically addressed to identify knowledge on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters among hospital attendees in out-patient department in General Hospital-Kalutara, to identify attitudes toward prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters among them and to describe their practices and factors associated for the knowledge attitudes and practices in prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disaster situations. This expects to identify gaps and areas to be improved to recommend cost effective strategies in preventing communicable disease outbreaks in disasters

Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out using systematic random sampling method to select participants from outpatient attendees at the General hospital- Kalutara. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge, attitudes, practices and associated factors targeting to identify baseline elements on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters.

Results

Age range of the participants was 18 to 58 years with mean age of 35 years and the majority (64.4%) was above 30 years of age. The female to male ratio was 3:1 with majority (70%) of females. Of the total sample 75% had their highest educational level as G.C.E (O/L) or above. Majority (52.2%) of the participants had average monthly income above Rs. 10,000/-. The study revealed that 63.3% of study population had good knowledge on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters while 70% of the participants had good practices in prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks. Considering the educational level on influencing

knowledge on communicable disease prevention and control in disasters, no significant association observed ($p= 0.087$). A significant association observed between participation or listening for educational programmes regarding communicable disease prevention, control and the knowledge ($p= 0.041$) assessed and the previous exposure to communicable diseases and the knowledge ($p= 0.01$). A significant association observed between the level of practice on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters and prior participation or listening for educational programmes related to communicable disease prevention and control ($P<0.05$). Also there were significant associations between practice and interest in searching details regarding communicable diseases ($p=0.011$) and previous exposure to communicable diseases ($p=0.001$). Participation for communicable disease prevention programmes showed to have a significant relationship to level of practice ($p=0.008$). According to the study it showed a significant association between knowledge and practice of prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters ($p< 0.05$). There was a significant association ($p<0.05$) between knowledge and practice on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Majority of the study population had good knowledge and a good level of practice on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters. Their overall attitudes towards prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters were favourable. Also this study concluded that there was a significant association between level of knowledge and level of practice in prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks in disasters. However there were some gaps regarding some aspects of knowledge, attitudes and practices on prevention and control of communicable disease outbreaks were identified and need further interventions.

Key words: communicable diseases, Outbreaks, Disasters