



Abstract

Introduction

Triage is the process by which disaster casualties are categorized per their need for first aid, resuscitation, emergency transportation and definitive medical care. The key principle of mass casualty incident Triage is to provide the best possible care to the most possible number of patients in a situation where the available resources are very limited.

Advanced interventions following Basic Life Support are known as the Advanced Life Support (ALS) including use of a defibrillator when appropriate. When ALS is provided at the right time, it will greatly improve mortality in medical emergencies.

Objectives

The aim of the study was to assess the knowledge and practices on Triage and ALS among medical officers at the Base Hospital Homagama

Methods

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among medical officers at the Base Hospital Homagama including the entire study population. A standard, validated, pretested self-administered questionnaire was utilized.

Data was analysed using statistical package for social sciences version 21. The level of statistical significance was set at $p=0.05$. Ethical principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence, non-maleficence were safeguarded throughout the study.

Results

The total number of potential study population was 157 medical officers whereas the response rate was 87.9% ($n=132$). Fifteen-point two percent ($n=20$) of the participants had had a structured training on both Triage and ALS and among them 61.9% ($n=60$) received that training more than 2 years ago.

The percentage of having a good knowledge in triage and ALS was 25% (n=33) and 32.6% (n=43) respectively whereas the percentage of having an average knowledge on Triage and ALS was 52.3% and 51.5% respectively. Twenty five percent (n=33) and 29.5% (n=39) were very confident respectively in performing triage in a mass casualty incident and providing ALS. Moreover, 21.2% was confident in triaging patients in a mass casualty event whereas 18.2% was confident in providing ALS.

Concerning the statistical associations analysed, a true statistical association was identified between the level of knowledge on triage and place of work as well as between the level of knowledge on triage and years of work experience after the internship. Moreover, there was a true statistical association between confidence in triaging and place of work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of knowledge on both triage and ALS was inadequate and the confidence on performing triage and ALS was unsatisfactory. Only a small percentage of the participants had received a structured training on Triage and ALS. Therefore, conducting structured training programmes on triage and ALS is of utmost importance to upgrade the emergency health service delivery of the institution.

Key words

Triage, Advanced Life Support, Knowledge, Practice