

Abstract

Introduction

Influenza, a respiratory tract disease which can cause serious outcomes has become an unpredictable threat to developing countries as Sri Lanka. School going students belong to a specific category which is at risk of spreading the disease. Further, they play a crucial role in health education. The present study was conducted to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices on influenza prevention and their associated factors among grade 12 students in Homagama educational zone.

Method

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among grade 12 students in Homagama educational zone over the period of June to November 2017. All government schools in Homagama educational zone which had advanced level classes were included in the study. Self-administered questionnaire was applied for assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices of 420 students. The total sample size was calculated according to a formula, by Lwanga and Lemeshow (1991). The sample size from each school was calculated using probability proportionate to the number of total grade 12 students in each school. The calculated number of students from each school was selected randomly from all subject streams. Informed written consent was obtained from students and parents. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. The data was entered and analysed using SPSS 20 software. The knowledge, attitudes and practices were assessed separately via a scoring system. The mean scores with standard deviation or median scores with inter quartile ranges were calculated depending on the distribution. Associations of categorical variables with knowledge, attitude and practices were identified using chi-square test at the level of significance of $p < 0.05$.

Results

The response rate was 100% with 233 females and 187 male students. Out of all responders, 64% (n= 267) had learnt on Influenza prior to the study. That was mainly from media (n=193:57.6%). The median score for knowledge was 47.72, with an Inter

quartile range of 36.36-61.36. Only 10% (n=42) had satisfactory level of knowledge ≥ 70 . Knowledge was associated with subject stream ($p < 0.05$). The students from Biological Sciences and Maths streams performed better than others. The median score for attitudes was 30.00, with an inter quartile range of 20.00-45.00. Only 2.9% (n= 12) had a satisfactory level of attitude ≥ 70 . There was a significant association between attitudes and subject stream as well as attitudes and monthly family income ($p < 0.05$). The median score for practices was 45.45 with an Inter quartile range of 36.36-63.63. Out of the study population 20.2% (n= 85) had scored ≥ 70 for preventive practices. Practices did not significantly associate with socio demographic factors ($p > 0.05$). The most practised measures for prevention were hand washing (n=267:63.6%) and washing handkerchief regularly (n=268: 63.8%). Isolation was practiced by 42.6% (n=179). Usage of face mask was practiced by 35% (n=149) and vaccination of family members was practiced by 27.4% (n=115) of the students.

Conclusions

Present study shows the inadequacy of knowledge, poor attitudes and practices on prevention of Influenza in the school community. This reflects their difficulty to handle an outbreak of Influenza. Study recommends incorporation of more interventions targeting behaviour changed communication among school children on prevention of influenza.

Keywords

Influenza, knowledge, attitudes, practices, school students, Sri Lanka