



ABSTRACT

Background: Due to rapid developmental activities and climate change, the occurrence of natural and human induced disasters has become more common. Although morbidity and mortality has declined substantially over years due to advancement in Medicine, hospitalization due to injuries has been increased. This increases the burden on Sri Lankan government as they spend more on health sector in comparison to other South Asian countries. As prehospital trauma care systems reduce the trauma morbidity and mortality, implementing such systems can reduce the government burden on it. Thus, basic life support measures taken by trained lay first responders such as military personnel is life-saving, it is important to build up their capacities by updating their knowledge and practices on prehospital trauma care while cultivating positive attitudes toward it.

Objective: To describe knowledge, attitudes and practices on prehospital trauma care among army soldiers in Matara District.

Methodology: A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out among army soldiers in Matara district. The whole population was studied belonging to the above group during the study period. Self-administered questionnaire was used as the study instrument. Cross tabulations were done to identify the possible associations using chi square statistics. Knowledge and practices were categorized in to two groups as “Poor” and “Good” taking 50% as the cut off.

Results: The study population consist of 266 participants (response rate 97.79%) lodged at army camp Matara fort and its two detachments located in Matara district. All were male and majority (47%) was in the age group of 28 to 37 years. Most (43.6%) had a monthly income of 30,000 rupees to 39,999 rupees and not qualified General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) – 65.8%. Nearly two third (68.8%) of them had worked for more than 05 years as army soldiers.

The overall level of knowledge on prehospital trauma care is poor (78.6%) while knowledge on golden hour of trauma (77.1%), triage system (74.4%), cardio pulmonary resuscitation (92.5%) and transportation of patients with spinal cord injury (69.2%) was markedly poor. Good knowledge is significantly associated with advance age, higher income and higher level of education whereas it has no significant association with work duration.

More than 80% of them had positive attitudes on most aspects of prehospital trauma care while majority thinks it is good to have knowledge on this topic and they would have performed better in disaster situations if they were trained on pre hospital trauma care.

With regard to the practice, majority (62.8%) is included in the group of poor level of practice. They lack practice on first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and safe transportation of the patients. Moreover, they had less opportunity to participate in drills/simulation programs done on disaster events. Good practice is significantly associated with advance age and higher level of education but not associated with level of income and working duration of army soldiers.

Highly significant association was observed between the level of knowledge and level of practice on prehospital trauma care of army soldiers. It is observed that higher the knowledge practices become better.

Conclusion: A higher proportion of army soldiers had poor knowledge and practice on prehospital trauma care while majority had positive attitudes regarding it. Majority lacks knowledge and practice in first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Due to significant association observed between knowledge and practice it can be recommended to include a training session on prehospital trauma care in the basic military curriculum which will enhance the ability to act as first responders effectively. Further research is needed in this area of prehospital trauma care to enhance the qualitative outcome.

Key words: Disasters, Prehospital trauma care, First responders, Army soldiers