



COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF PARACETAMOL (ACETAMINOPHEN) IN A SELECTED SRI LANKAN POPULATION

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Paracetamol is a commonly used over the counter drug which taken in overdose can lead to acute poisoning. It is the single most commonly taken drug in overdoses that leads to hospital presentation and admission. This study was conducted to investigate community perception regarding paracetamol in a selected Sri Lankan population. This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Nelumvila grama niladhari area (rural) in Anuradhapura district and Southern Horagolla grama niladhari area (urban) in Puttalam district, Sri Lanka. Volunteers (n=400; age 18 - 60 years) were selected by random sampling. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Study population had adequate knowledge of paracetamol as a drug and 90% of the participants were aware of paracetamol as a suicidal agent in overdose. Knowledge about paracetamol in rural area (n=166, 83%) was higher compared to urban area (n=114, 57%). Knowledge about paracetamol was associated with area ($P < 0.0001$), age ($P=0.0009$) and educational status ($P=0.0009$), and was not associated with gender ($P = 0.2609$). Most of the study participants (n=392, 98%) used to have one brand of paracetamol at all times and there was a statistically significant association between area and having one particular brand of paracetamol ($P=0.0001$). The majority of the participants (n=364, 91%) had paracetamol readily available at home. Usage of paracetamol within last three months showed a significant difference with area and gender ($P=0.0001$). Usage of paracetamol was more in rural area and female to male ratio was 2:1 in the study population. The study population has adequate knowledge regarding paracetamol and it varied with age. There is high availability of paracetamol at home which highlight the practice of storing the drug. Therefore reduction of the availability & advice on proper usage may be beneficial in reducing paracetamol overdose/poisoning in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *paracetamol, knowledge, availability, usage, overdose*