

HEALTH CARE RELATED BEHAVIOR AMONG RESIDENTS OF A SELECTED MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH AREA

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There is limited understanding of the factors that influence decisions with regard to health care related behaviours in the Sri Lankan context. The aim of this study is to explore the effect of socio-demographic and other relevant factors on the health care related behaviour of the residents of a selected semi-urban Medical Officer of Health area.

A descriptive cross sectional study design was used and 422 respondents from an MOH area were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Interviewer administered questionnaires were used to collect data and data was analysed using SPSS version 15. Descriptive data was presented as numbers and percentages, whereas associations between categories were analysed with chi square tests.

Majority of respondents were chief occupant (51.2%), males (50.7%), Sinhalese (97.6%) and Buddhists (87%), aged between 41 years to 50 years (21.1%), earning Rs.30,000 – Rs.44,999 monthly (25.4%) and educated up to GCE A/L (35.8%). Statistically significant associations existed between the sex ($p=0.027$), age ($p=0.000$), education level of the respondents ($p=0.000$) and their perception of health. Majority sought treatment after failure of self-medication (57.3%) and when daily activities were affected (60.2%). Statistically significant associations between age of the ($p=0.000$), education level ($p=0.000$), monthly income of the respondents ($p=0.000$) and the preferred health care system were identified. The preferred health care system differed according to illnesses. Most sought ayurvedic health care (47.6%) for fractures, whilst allopathic medicine was preferred for other illnesses. Affordability (72.7%), availability (79.8%), accessibility (71.3%) and waiting time (54.97%) were main factors affecting the selection of health care provider. Majority used their medicine as prescribed and there were no statistically significant association between sex and methods of medicine use ($p=0.139$).

Health care related behavior is a collection of decision making processes that are dominated by an array of factors ranging from the socio-demographic characteristics of a person to the social norms and attributes of the health care systems and providers.

Keywords: Health care seeking behaviour, factors, decisions