**Diabetic patients; their knowledge, practices and attitudes regarding oral health**

De Silva DTN¹, Edirisinghe RMSD¹, Weerasekera MM¹, Gunasekera TDCP¹, Fernando SSN¹, Bulugahapitiya U²

¹Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, ²Colombo South Teaching Hospital

**Objectives:** To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding oral health among patients attending the diabetic clinic at Colombo South Teaching Hospital

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study among 427 patients attending the diabetic clinic was carried out using an interviewer administered pretested questionnaire.

**Results:** Of the 427 patients, majority (74%) were females above 50 years of age. Of the patients 56% recognized an association between diabetes and oral health. Only 15% knew that they were more prone to oral fungal infections due to diabetes though 89% knew that diabetes resulted in delayed wound healing. Oral cancer (72%) was mainly recognized as a complication of poor oral hygiene but majority were unaware of the risk of endocarditis. Regarding attitudes, 98% believed that diabetics should be vigilant regarding their oral hygiene. While 29% believed that a dentist should be visited at least twice a year, only one patient practiced this. A majority (93%) was of the attitude that brushing teeth twice a day is important to maintain good oral hygiene and 92% claimed to practice this. Overall study population had moderate knowledge (64%) good attitudes (77%) and moderate practices (73%) with regard to their oral health. All patients were willing to receive advice and information regarding oral hygiene or be directed to relevant dental clinics during their diabetic clinic visit.

**Conclusions:** Educating diabetics regarding oral health is a timely need as diabetes is a major health burden in Sri Lanka.