

**PP 005**

**Mothers' role in identifying developmental problems early: A descriptive study among mothers in selected MOH areas in Colombo**

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**Introduction & Objectives:**

Many children with clinically identifiable developmental problems are presented late for medical help due to poor early recognition. Therefore the mother should be alert regarding her child's development to identify delays early. The objective of this study was to assess the mothers' awareness of the advantages of early identification of developmental disorders among those attending the immunization clinics in Kolonnawa and Dehiwala MOH areas.

**Methods:**

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 421 mothers having a child of 18 months. All study participants who were eligible were taken into the study. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data and chi-square test performed in order to find associations.

**Results:**

Only 54.5% (n=226) of mothers considered that certain conditions need medical attention by 18 months of age, and of them only less than 20% correctly identified these conditions. Most mothers sought medical help if the child does not walk by 18 months. Nevertheless, 93.5% of them agreed that knowing the developmental milestones was important. Majority (82.6%) of mothers reported that developmental disorders can be identified early. However 36% of mothers were unaware of facilities available for children with special needs. Majority of mothers believed that developmental milestones can be identified by the parents (n=291, 72.6%) and the first person from whom they would seek advice was the Public Health Midwife (n=230, 56%). This observed difference was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:**

Mothers' knowledge on identifying abnormal development and bringing them for medical attention in early ages was poor. Awareness of availability of facilities for early intervention is imperative through existing field services.