

# **KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SELF REPORTED PRACTICES OF NURSES AT THE NATIONAL HOSPITAL OF SRI LANKA ON THE LAST OFFICES OF A DECEASED.**

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**BACKGROUND:** Nurses care for patients before they are born, during their lifetime and also after death. The care rendered by nurses to a deceased in a hospital has traditionally been referred to as ‘last offices’ or care after death.

**AIM:** The aim of this study was to describe knowledge, attitudes and practices among nurses in relation to the last offices.

**METHODS:** This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on a convenience sample of 368 nurses from randomly selected 15 units in the National Hospital of Sri Lanka. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was developed using literature and expert opinion. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 16).

**RESULTS:** The response rate was 87.2%. Mean age and experience of the participants were 33.57±6.9 years and 8.33±6.8 years respectively. The majority were females (92.4%). According to the results, more than half of the participants had poor knowledge in certification and registration of death (57.9%), health and safety (50.3%), legal requirements (50.3%) and supporting family members (52.2%) of the respectively. Most of the participants had a good knowledge in recording last offices (72.3%) eye donation (58.7%) information to relatives (52.7%) and dead body preparation (71%) respectively. Almost all (98.4%) had good knowledge in responsibility of property of the deceased and respecting the religious and cultural wishes.

Most of the participants (95.4%) have accepted addressing religious and cultural requirements as their duty, importance of respecting privacy and dignity of the patient (95.7%) and importance of considering the impact of their own behavior on the family during last offices (97.5%).

Only 27.7% of participants had good self-reported practices while 44.3% had fair self-reported practices and 28% had poor self-reported practices regarding last offices.

**CONCLUSION:** Although a majority showed good knowledge, favourable attitudes and fair self-reported practices towards the last offices, deficiencies in all those areas were identified. Nurses’ knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding last offices could be improved through continuing education to enhance the quality of care. The findings could be utilized by hospital authorities in the development of policies and establishing practice guidelines for nurses.