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Knowledge on asthma among pharmacists working in the community – Reporting base-line data of a multi-center interventional study

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Objectives: To assess the knowledge on asthma and related medicines among pharmacists in selected community pharmacies in the Colombo District.

Methods: All pharmacists in eight selected Rajya Osusalas participated. Interviewer administered open-ended questions were asked to assess knowledge and was scored out of 100. Counseling steps on using metered dose inhalers (MDIs) and dry powder inhalers (DPIs) were documented.

Results: Among 70 pharmacists, most had certificate level pharmacy education (98.6%) and 43.0% had five years or less experience as a pharmacist. The mean score (standard deviation) for knowledge was 41.3 (6.1). 'Relievers' and 'preventers' were identified as main categories of asthma medicines by 68.6% and 61.4% respectively. 'Salbutamol' and 'beclomethasone' were the commonly suggested examples for relievers (92.9%) and preventers (48.6%) respectively. Inhalation was selected as the best (98.6%) route for administering asthma medicines. MDIs (80.0%) and DPIs (81.4%) were identified as main inhaler types. Children and elderly (91.4%) were commonly identified as needing a spacer device. Poor patient knowledge (75.7%) was the frequently highlighted reason for therapeutic failure. Among eight essential steps, pharmacists demonstrated a mode of 5 steps for both MDI and DPI. Pharmacists frequently missed 'hold the inhaler upright' and 'replace cap' for MDIs and 'check for remaining powder' for DPIs.

Conclusions: Pharmacists scored less than 50% for knowledge on asthma. Most missed essential counseling steps in using inhalers. There is a clear knowledge gap on asthma among pharmacists. An effective educational aid to support counseling on asthma will be beneficial.

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Knowledge on carcinoma of breast and practice of self-breast examination among female university students in Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

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Objectives: This study was to assess the knowledge on carcinoma of breast and practice of self-breast examination among a cohort of female university students.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study involving 222 female students aged 20-30 years was carried out using a 17 item self-structured, validated questionnaire between March and September 2016.

Results: Among total participants, 23.4% were nursing students and 76.6% were medical students. Ethnically, 55.9% were Sinhalese, 20.2% were Tamils and 23.9% were Muslims. The majority of the participants (96.8%) had heard about breast cancer. Newspapers/magazines (78.8%) were the main source of information. Most of them (82.9%) had heard about breast self-examination (BSE) but only 33% have ever done it. Of those, 9.6% did it because one of their family members had breast cancer. Awareness about risk factors such as positive family history, use of oral contraceptive pills, no breast feeding and early menarche were 82.9%, 58.6%, 68.0% and