

AWARENESS AND PRACTICES REGARDING RABIES AND ANIMAL BITE MANAGEMENT AMONG ANIMAL BITE VICTIMS

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Animal bite is defined as injury caused by animal mouth and teeth, resulting in direct tissue damage, deep anatomical structure disruption, introduction of infectious agents and envenomation. Rabies is one of the most dangerous viral diseases transmitted through animal bites. In Sri Lanka, 26 cases were detected in 2015, while 24 died out of them and dogs were responsible for 75% of human rabies deaths. Management of bite wounds is essential in the management and prevention of complications of animal bites. Lack of public awareness towards animal bites is a major problem in prevention and control of rabies. Objective of the study was to assess awareness and practices regarding rabies and animal bite management among animal bite victims. Descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among randomly selected 187 victims of animal bites who attended the OPD services of Awissawella Base Hospital. A pre-tested interviewer-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and chi square test were used for data analysis and SPSS 23 was used as the statistical analysis tool. Age of respondents ranged from

15-60 years. Among the participants, 59% were males while 41% females. Among the victims 70.1% occurred due to dogs, 28.3% due to cats and 1.6% due to rats. 95.7% of the victims have washed the wound site with soap and water and 90.4% sought hospital treatment on the day of the bite. Only 17 (9.1%) of study participants knew microorganism as the cause of rabies. Knowledge was unsatisfactory regarding other animals that could transmit rabies and modes of transmission other than bites (39.8%). Moreover, excessive salivation was identified by majority (41.6%) as a clinical manifestation of rabies in animals, while knowledge of other signs such as altered personality (24.0%), fear to drink water (19.5%), fits (14.9%) were poor. Awareness and practices regarding rabies and animal bite management among the victims were not satisfactory. Public awareness programs on animal reservoir of rabies, modes of transmission and initial management of the wound must be conducted in order to prevent rabies and animal bites.

Keywords: Awareness, Practices, Rabies, Animal Bite, Victims