Knowledge on HIV/AIDS and Attitude towards People Living with HIV/AIDS among Healthcare Workers at District General Hospital Kalutara

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Although Sri Lanka has a low Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) prevalence, there has been an increase in HIV/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) cases over last few decades. HIV-related stigma and discrimination within the healthcare system can have serious effects as it can discourage people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) from seeking essential health care, creating a latent epidemic within the country. The aim of this study is to assess the level of knowledge, the level of stigma and discrimination towards PLWHA among healthcare workers at District General Hospital Kalutara. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire on a sample of 115 healthcare workers, consisting 31 doctors, 45 nurses and 39 minor staff from medical and surgical wards, selected through simple random sampling. 59.1% of participants had good knowledge, with doctors being the majority. This was a foreseen result owing to years of learning they have undergone. Stigma was highest among minor staff and nurses. 94.8% of participants admitted to practicing at least one act of discrimination, and among them, minor staff were the majority. Poor knowledge was a positive driver for both stigma and discrimination possibly due to unawareness of modes of transmission. As healthcare workers are expected to have a better understanding about HIV and lesser stigma and discriminatory attitudes compared to the public, there is a need for a programme that would educate about the disease to all healthcare workers to eliminate the stigma so that PLWHA will benefit both medically and socially.

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