

### **Knowledge and practices of hand hygiene and associated factors among registered patient care assistants in government hospitals in Jaffna district**

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**Background and objective:** Effective hand hygiene is essential to reduce nosocomial infections. Compliance of patient care assistants with hand hygiene guidelines are reportedly poor. This study aims to determine the influence of socio-demographic and work-related factors on knowledge and practices of hand hygiene among registered patient care assistants in government hospitals in Jaffna district.

**Methods:** An institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among all 109 patient care assistants working in five government healthcare institutions in Jaffna district, using an interviewer administered questionnaire. Data were analyzed with SPSS 21 software. Data relevant to sociodemographic and work-related factors, knowledge and practice were summarized as percentages. Chi-square test was used to analyze associations between variables.

**Results:** All patient care assistants currently working in Jaffna district participated in the study; just over half the sample comprised males (52.3%, n=57). Mean age of the sample was 46.8 years. Less than half (45%) of the sample had good knowledge. Only 27.5% knew the standard steps of handwashing, although 70.6% knew about alcohol hand rub. With respect to gender, 45.6% of males and 46.2% of females had good knowledge (p=0.96). A larger proportion of the over 34 years age group had good knowledge (54.8%) compared to the proportion with good knowledge among below 34-year-olds (30.8%) (p=0.018). With respect to practice, 34 (31.2%) patient care assistants reported not washing their hands as they were too busy, and 42 (38.5%) reported forgetting to wash their hands.

**Conclusion:** Although knowledge levels are reasonably good among patient care assistants in government hospitals, hand hygiene practices are unsatisfactory. Periodic in-service training and effective monitoring may help to improve hand hygiene among patient care assistants.

**Keywords:** Nosocomial Infections, Hand Hygiene, Patient Care Assistants, Jaffna