

Knowledge on pre-surgical informed consent and associated factors among patients undergoing general surgery in Teaching Hospital Jaffna

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Background and objective: Lack of knowledge on pre-surgical informed consent increases the likelihood of patient dissatisfaction with surgical care. The objective of our study is to assess knowledge on pre-surgical informed consent and describe the influence of patient and cultural factors on this knowledge among patients undergoing general surgery in Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Material and Method: This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out using an interviewer-administered questionnaire among 429 patients undergoing general surgery in Teaching Hospital Jaffna selected by systematic sampling from October to November 2019. Between group analysis was performed among those who had and did not have adequate knowledge. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Chi-square test was used at 5% critical level.

Results: More than half the sample comprised females (52.2%, n=223). A little less than half the participants had studied at least up to GCE O/L (48.7%, n=208) and 29.5% (n=126) had studied beyond GCE O/L. Majority were Hindus (92.5%, n=395) from Jaffna (80.1%, n=342). In the sample, 53.6% had inadequate knowledge on pre-surgical informed consent. Female sex (p=0.003), being middle-aged (30 and 60 years) (p=0.016), being a white-collar worker (p=0.001), higher education level (P<0.001), willingness to converse with the doctor (P<0.001) and reading the consent form completely (P<0.001), were associated with adequate knowledge.

Conclusion: Less than half the patients awaiting general surgery at Teaching Hospital Jaffna have adequate knowledge on informed consent. Improving the communication skills of healthcare workers and giving adequate time for patients to make an informed decision may help to improve the patients' knowledge on informed consent.

Keywords: Informed Consent, Knowledge, General Surgery, Teaching Hospital Jaffna