



Prevalence, pattern and factors influencing betel chewing among bus drivers in district of Jaffna

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Background: Betel is chewed by approximately 600 million people worldwide, indicating that it is one of the most important commercial crops that is grown, especially in Southeast Asia. We observed that betel chewing in the district of Jaffna and is common among bus drivers.

Objectives: To assess the prevalence, pattern, socio-cultural factors and knowledge on impact of betel chewing and to assess the influence of knowledge and socio-cultural factors on prevalence and pattern of betel chewing among bus drivers in Jaffna district

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in a stratified sample of 423 registered drivers using an interviewer administered questionnaire during March-April 2014. Simple descriptive statistics and Chi Square test were used to describe the results.

Results: Mean age was 41.42 years (SD=10.29, Minimum 20, Maximum 65). The overall prevalence of betel chewing was 70.4% and 9.4% were ex-betel chewers. Sixty one percent of current chewers have had the habit for ≥ 5 years while 89.2% chewed betel daily. Almost all current chewers used arecanut. Fifty five percent of the drivers said that they chewed betel as it helped to concentrate on driving. Respondents had poor knowledge on demerits (48.5%), treatment of diseases caused by betel chewing (49.6%), effects on central nervous and cardiovascular system by betel chewing (59.6%) and had good knowledge on symptoms of disease caused by betel chewing (54.4%). There were statistically significant association of poor knowledge with chewing betel such as knowledge of demerits of betel chewing ($p < 0.05$); symptoms of diseases caused by betel chewing ($p < 0.05$); Treatment of disease ($p < 0.05$). There were statistically significant association of poor knowledge with pattern of betel chewing such as knowledge of demerits of betel chewing ($p < 0.05$); symptoms of diseases caused by betel chewing ($p < 0.05$); treatment of disease ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: The prevalence of betel chewing among bus drivers in Jaffna district was 70.4%. Most of them had the habit of daily chewing for more than five years. There were statistically significant association of poor knowledge with prevalence and pattern of betel chewing.

Key words: betel chewing, drivers, Jaffna, prevalence, pattern, knowledge.