

Awareness and attitude towards thalassemia among A/L students studying in the Kurunegala Education Zone

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Introduction and Objectives: Thalassemia is one of the most common inherited disorders caused by abnormalities in Hemoglobin synthesis. The successful prevention of the disease depends on the awareness of the general population. The present study aimed to assess the awareness and attitude towards Thalassemia and its associated factors among A/L (aged ≥ 18) students in the Kurunegala education zone.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 854 A/L students at the Kurunegala education zone from October 2020 to November 2021. A cluster sampling method was applied to recruit the students. A self-administered questionnaire in Tamil and Sinhala versions was used to collect data. The questionnaires were administered via Google forms and directly to students. Data analysis was performed by SPSS 16 software based on research problems, objectives, and variables. The level of awareness on thalassemia was measured out of 14 marks. Responses for attitude questions were recorded using a five-point 'Likert scale.' Pearson product-moment correlation, ANOVA, and T-tests were applied to find out the associated factors with awareness and attitude.

Results: Completed 493 responses were received (response rate-57.7%). The results indicated that the students had higher awareness with a mean score of 10.37 (SD =2.37) out of 14. Also, the students had a positive attitude towards thalassemia with a mean score of 15.03 (SD= 3.12). Age and the A/L study streams had a statistically significant association with awareness and attitude scores, while the medium of study and positive family history of thalassemia were associated with awareness. The type of school was associated with the student's attitude.

Conclusion: The students had higher awareness and a positive attitude towards thalassemia. National thalassemia prevention programs and the awareness programs of the schools may play a significant contribution in raising awareness of thalassemia among Kurunegala students.

Keywords: Awareness, Attitude, Thalassemia, A/L students, Kurunegala