

IMPACT OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON MEDICAL AND NON-MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC DURING CRISES

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The increased frequency of disasters in Sri Lanka in recent decades has pressured the need for better emergency preparedness and response. This study aimed to identify the importance and impact of the training programs conducted at the Health Emergency and Disaster Management Training Centre (HEDMaTC), Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya. The centre conducts training programs on public health emergency management and sexual and reproductive health during crises. The questionnaire-based feedback of the past participants (n=75) of the programs conducted by the HEDMaTC was considered in the analysis. Results showed that the training and knowledge provided by these programs were highly effective and valuable during crises. From the sample, 23% of the participants confirmed that they used the knowledge gained from these programs in actual crises to manoeuvre through them successfully. 36% of the participants stated that they could use this knowledge to draw plans for disaster management policies and formulate strategies for sexual and reproductive health during crises. In comparison, another 30% of the respondents confirmed that they had the opportunity to apply this knowledge during crises in their real life. All the participants recommended the programs conducted by the centre and also indicated that they wished to participate in future programs. However, these training programs have placed HEDMaTC at the forefront of conducting medical-related disaster management training programs in Sri Lanka. This study identified many areas that require improvement in the training programs, such as child abuse during crises and leadership in public health. We recommend that HEDMaTC shall develop and maintain a live directory of the trained personnel to facilitate quick access to them during disasters in the future.

Keywords: Disaster management, Public health emergency, Reproductive health, Training programs