Knowledge and Practices on Healthy Lifestyle among Medical Students at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

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Knowledge acquisition alone does not ensure the translation of acquired knowledge into practice. Therefore, it is essential to assess the extent to which medical students adopt healthy lifestyle practices and to examine the relationship between their knowledge and behaviour in this regard. This cross-sectional study involved 454 medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya. A self-administered questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge on healthy lifestyle and several close-ended questions were used to determine their current practices. Collected data was analysed using SPSS. Among the participants, 58.8% were females and 41.2% were males. 49.4 % had adequate knowledge about healthy lifestyle. Only 21.6% of the students engage in an adequate amount of physical activity according to WHO recommendations. Out of them, 61.23% identified time as the main constraint for engaging in physical activities. Only 23.3% perceived they consumed a balanced diet, and 91.8% reported consuming junk food more than twice a week. Only 27.3% slept 7 hours or more, which is the recommended level of sleep according to CDC guidelines. 96.5% of students did not smoke and 91% did not consume alcohol. There was no statistically significant association between the knowledge on healthy lifestyle and engaging in physical activities ($p=0.546$), consuming a balanced diet ($p=0.365$), getting adequate sleep ($p=0.310$), smoking ($p=0.573$), and consuming alcohol ($p=0.562$). The knowledge on healthy lifestyles is adequate among participants. Whilst the numbers of students refraining from alcohol and smoking are very high, the number of students engaging in adequate physical activities, having a balanced diet, and getting an adequate amount of sleep is low. There was no statistically significant association between the level of knowledge about healthy lifestyle and their current practices. This could be attributed to various constraining factors that hinder individuals from engaging in healthy practices, including time constraints.

Keywords: Healthy lifestyle, Physical activity, Knowledge, Medical students