

Knowledge and attitudes toward patient safety among nursing students at three state universities in Sri Lanka

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A significant number of people are unintentionally injured as a consequence of their treatment through health care systems. Patient safety is about prevention of such errors and adverse effects to the patients seeking medical care. It is a vital component in the quality of nursing care. Nursing students who participate in patient care during their clinical training should develop knowledge and favourable attitudes required for competent practice while ensuring patient safety. This study was aimed at describing knowledge and attitudes toward patient safety among nursing students.

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted among undergraduate nursing students at the Universities of Sri Jayewardenepura, Peradeniya and Ruhuna. The sample consisted of all undergraduate nursing students (N=192) who were in their 2nd, 3rd and 4th academic years of study. A pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire was used. Knowledge was categorized as poor, moderate and good. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.

The response rate was 76.8%. Out of 192 participants, 52.1% (100) had a moderate level of knowledge and 47.4% (91) had a good level of knowledge on patient safety. A progressive improvement of knowledge was observed with each academic year. Good knowledge was evident regarding medication safety, prevention of falls and safety during transportation of patients. There were significant associations between sex and knowledge level ($p=0.024$) and between academic year and the knowledge level ($p=0.00$).

Knowledge deficiencies were observed on the definitions related to the topic, safety during preparation for IV cannulation, selecting the size of a urinary catheter, collection of a urine sample from an indwelling catheter and the placement of patients. Overall attitudes toward patient safety were positive. Participants had positive attitudes toward ensuring team work, adhering to correct procedures and reporting of errors even when there is no harm to the patient. A majority (46.4%) agreed that making errors is inevitable while 38% agreed on blaming and punishing people who commit errors.

Most of the study participants had good or moderate levels of knowledge and positive attitudes toward patient safety. Deficiencies related to knowledge on invasive patient care procedures and attitudes toward persons who report errors were identified. Improving knowledge and attitudes regarding patient safety among nursing undergraduates will ultimately contribute to enhanced patient care quality.