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P28

[166]

PUBLIC HEALTH MIDWIVES' HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES TOWARDS ABNORMAL VAGINAL DISCHARGE

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ABSTRACT

Abnormal vaginal discharge is a common gynaecological complaint among women aged 15 to 49 years. Public Health Midwife (PHM) is the family health care worker who care women at community level in Sri Lankan health care system. This study aimed to assess PHMs' knowledge on vaginal discharge, attitudes, and present health education activities related to vaginal discharge.

This community based cross sectional study was conducted among all consenting PHMs who work in Colombo district, Sri Lanka. A self-developed, validated, pretested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysis.

A total of 308 PHMs participated and the mean age was 40.69 years (SD±10.72). Nearly half of the participants had work experience for more than 11 years. Majority of PHMs have performed health education during home visits (72.7%) and at clinics (66.2%). Mean knowledge score regarding vaginal discharge and causes was 53.6 (SD ± 12.43). Only few participants (3.2 %) had good knowledge on vaginal discharge while 48% of participants obtained poor knowledge. Lack of knowledge was observed in the areas of reproductive tract infections and causes for pathological vaginal discharge. The mean knowledge scores was significantly higher among those who had less than 40 years of age ($p=0.004$) and work experience less than 15 years ($p=0.002$) to their counterparts.

Majority agreed that educate females on vaginal discharge as a primary responsibility (97%) and nearly 17% rated their competency in providing health education on vaginal discharge as poor. Lack of available time (84.7%), lack of teaching aids (75%) and women's anxiety and shyness in revealing health problems (73.4%) were the major challenges faced.

The PHMs showed motivation towards health education at community level. As the insufficient level of knowledge was found, there is a need of upgrading their knowledge and skills as a strategy to meet the growing demand for quality health education and referral activities at community level.

Keywords: Vaginal complaint, family health care workers, women's health, community education, health promotion