

## Knowledge, attitude and practices related to leishmaniasis among healthcare workers in an endemic area in southern Sri Lanka

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### Introduction

Leishmaniasis is a neglected parasitic disease and endemic to Sri Lanka. Patients are reported from all regions of the country, highest being from Southern and North-Western provinces. Public health workers play an important role in controlling this disease. The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitude and preventive practices (KAP) of healthcare workers in a high endemic area (Beliatta) to identify the gaps in the health system.

### Methods

Data was collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire and the survey was held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

### Results

All participants (N=43) responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the study population were public health midwives (41.8%) followed by public health inspectors (PHI) (20.9%). Most of the respondents (93.1%) knew the disease by name and knew it caused skin lesions (N = 40, 83.3%). Leishmaniasis was perceived as a serious health condition by nearly half of the respondents (48%). The majority (90.7%) were aware of the sandfly as the vector and nearly two-thirds of the respondents (67.4%) were able to identify the sandfly. Although 44.7% of healthcare workers did not know the biting time of the sand fly, a majority (74.4%) knew the breeding places. Allopathic medicine was mentioned as the main method of treatment by 95.1% of the participants. The respondents had satisfactory knowledge on vector control methods (59.7%) while environmental sanitation was the most commonly considered preventive measure. However, 54.8% of respondents were dissatisfied with current treatment methods and nearly two-thirds of respondents (66.6%) indicated that current control mechanisms were not effective.

### Conclusion

Frontline healthcare workers in this study area have adequate knowledge about the disease but require support to identify effective control and preventive measures.

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