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Incidence of needle prick injuries and awareness regarding prevention among third and fourth year medical students

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Objectives: To determine the following regarding needle prick injuries among 3rd and 4th year medical students of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura: Incidence and causes, Awareness of the potential dangers and preventive measures, Adherence to proper procedures following such injuries.

Methods: This was a descriptive cross sectional study conducted among 260 medical students in 3rd and 4th years of the MBBS course, Faculty of Medical Sciences in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in 2012. Interviewer administered questionnaires were used for data collection.

Results: 16.9%(n=44) of participating medical students had experienced at least 1 needle prick injury. The commonest cause was recapping needles (36.4%), followed by blood drawing procedure (29.6%). 93.5% had an average theory knowledge regarding blood-borne infections, while 52.7% had good practical knowledge regarding prevention of needle prick injuries and blood-borne infections. 96.7% of medical students knew of hepatitis B vaccination. Only 45.5 % had taken proper post-injury follow up action.

Conclusions: Although the majority of the study population was aware of needle prick injury and its dangers, good knowledge of safe practices was average. Adherence to proper procedures after needle prick injuries was inadequate. Further education and training of medical students attending clinical wards may be needed in this area.