

(98)

**Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices among Medical Officers on Disaster Preparedness:
Study from Base Hospital Panadura (BHP) and Kethumathi Maternity Hospital
(KMH), Panadura in Western Province**

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Abstract

Climate change is contributing to increased disasters in the world. As the disaster events are rising, health, socio-economic and political consequences are inevitable. Therefore, managing disasters to reduce the risk and impacts is given high priority in any development agendas. In this context, emergency and disaster preparedness have become a vital element in disaster management. To manage disaster induced health impacts that include deaths and injuries, hospitals play a major role. The objective of this study was to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of medical officers on disaster preparedness in two key hospitals in the country. The present study focused on the medical officers in Base Hospital Panadura (BHP) and Kethumathi Maternity Hospital (KMH) regarding disaster preparedness. Cross-sectional research was designed to collect data from the health personnel working in two hospitals through a questionnaire which was prepared and distributed online. Data were collected from 95 and 17 doctors, who were randomly chosen, from BHP and KMH respectively. The majority of the respondents (93%) stated that hospital disaster preparedness plans could assist in reducing morbidity and mortality during an event of a disaster. In both hospitals, 40% of respondents were familiar with the disaster preparedness (DP) programs and 60 % were aware that such programs exist in their hospital. Around 67% and 65% of the medical officers from BHP and KMH respectively had stated that the prior experience of the medical officers is the key to handling a post disaster health management. The statistical analysis indicated that knowledge and practices of the medical officers were significantly linked to DP while the attitudes of the participants did not demonstrate any link to the DP programs. In summary, enhancing knowledge and good practices aiming at post disaster medical care as well as enhanced disaster preparedness activities among the medical officers contribute to disaster risk reduction.

Keywords: Disaster preparedness, Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, Medical officers