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Occupational health problems and associated factors among nurses working in paediatric critical care setting in a tertiary care children hospital in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Madawala SGML¹, Warnakulasuriya SSP²

¹*Lady Ridgway Hospital for Children,* ²*Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura*

Objectives: Purpose of this study was to describe the prevalence of work related health problems and associated factors among pediatric critical care nurses at Lady Ridgway Hospital for Children in Colombo.

Methods: Purposively selected 130 nurses working in the pediatric critical care section at Lady Ridgway Hospital for Children in Colombo were given a pretested self administered questionnaire to ascertain work characteristics and data related to work related health problems

Results: Only 114 participants had returned the questionnaires giving response rate of 87.6%. All the participants were female and 28% (n=32) were married. Among work related health problems, majority 78 % (n=89) had at least one musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) during the past 12 months. Common MSD were low back pain 45.5%(n=52) followed by knee pain 39.5%(n=45), ankle pain 34.2%(n=39), shoulder pain 26.3 % (n=30), neck pain 14%(n=16) wrist pain 13.2%(n=15). In addition, 8.8%(n=10) participants suffered from hand dermatitis. About 30.7 % (n=40) had painful varicose veins at the time of data collection. With regards to associated factors, age was significantly associated with elbow pain (OR= 1.1; 95% CI=1.0-1.3). Prevalence of varicose vein significantly associated with knee pain (OR= 4.9; 95% CI=2.1-11.6) and increased number of working hours (OR=2.6; 95% CI=1.2-6.2). Knee pain shown significant association with experiencing stresses during the working hours (OR= 4.2; 95% CI=1.1-15.4).

Conclusion: Prevalence of work related health problems among pediatric critical care nurses was high. Predominant health problems were pain in low back, knee, shoulder, ankle and painful varicose veins. Action needs to be taken to reduce risk factors of musculoskeletal disorders in the pediatric critical care.