

PP 16**Knowledge and attitudes regarding rabies among grade ten students in the Nugegoda education division**Jayawardene DMS¹, Gunawardena NS¹¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo*

Objectives: Rabies continues to contribute to the mortality, morbidity and economic burden of Sri Lanka, despite the conducive environment prevalent in our isle for its elimination. A lack of knowledge, and unfavourable attitudes have been attributed as the main cause of this dilemma. Awareness activities targeting children aged 15 years and younger have been advocated as a solution to bridge the gap between the present state of burden caused by rabies and the desired state of a rabies free country. Hence this study describes the knowledge, and attitudes regarding rabies, among grade ten students in the Nugegoda education division

Methods: A cross-sectional study with multistage cluster sampling using probability proportionate to the size of the grade 10 student population was used to collect data from 694 students in Type IAB and IC schools, using a self- administered questionnaire.

Results: 473(68.2%) students were found to have poor knowledge regarding rabies. 509(73.7%) students were not aware that a lick by an infected animal on mucous membranes results in transmission of the disease. Only 4.7% (n = 22) of those who had heard of rabies correctly identified sterilisation of dogs as a rabies preventive strategy. However, a majority (n=543, 78.2%) were of the view that the public should have a responsible attitude towards their dogs in order to control rabies among the dog population.

Conclusions: A majority of students had poor knowledge regarding rabies although most had favourable attitudes pertaining to the prevention of rabies.