Knowledge, practices and barriers regarding infection control among hospital cleaners in the National Hospital of Sri Lanka, Colombo

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Introduction: Hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) are a leading cause of illness and death worldwide. Proper waste management, cleaning and, disinfection of the hospital environment are vital components of preventing HAIs, and hospital cleaners play a vital role in this regard by creating and maintaining a safe and clean environment. The aim of this study was to examine the knowledge, practices and, barriers regarding infection control among hospital cleaners at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), Colombo.

Methodology: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among randomly selected 222 hospital cleaners at the NHSL during February to March 2017. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of NHSL. Data were collected using a pre-tested interviewer-administered questionnaire after obtaining written informed consent. The questionnaire consisted of four sections namely socio-demographic information, knowledge on infection control, practices of infection control and barriers to following guidelines established by the Infection Control Unit, NHSL. Overall knowledge and practice were categorized good, moderate and poor if the overall score ≥75%, 50-74% and < 50% respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data into frequencies and percentages using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Results: Majority of the sample (75.7%, n=168) was females and almost half (n=116) belongs to 46-60 years age group and had educated up to grade 6-10. Further, 46.4% of the participants had 2-5 years of working experience. Overall knowledge of infection control was at the moderate level in the majority of the sample (74.7%, n=166). Though knowledge was good in the areas of ways of spreading diseases and methods of spreading infections (91.9%), proper usage of cleansing solution (96.7%), proper waste disposal (87.7%) and colour code of cleaning equipment (85.1%), it was lower in some important areas including preparation of cleansing solution (61.25%),

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transportation of wastes (38.9%), using of gloves when touching dirty materials (56.3%) and using of spill kits (69.8%). Though good practices were observed in the cleaning of units (86.5%) and bathrooms (94.6%) and equipment (74.3%), practices on the use of gloves (56.3%), spill kits (52.3%) and removing accessories were poor. Regarding barriers, more than 56 % of participants had not received any training related to their job. Further, 34.2% of the participants were suffering from chronic illnesses and 66.7% of the participants were not satisfied with their salary.

Discussion: Levels of knowledge and practice and some gaps found among hospital cleaners on infection control are consistent with previous findings (Yamazhan et al. 2009). Since the presence of HAIs affects on quality of care while reducing the quality of life of the patients, improving hospital workers knowledge and practices are of paramount importance. Beside, barriers including lack of personal facilities and training and, unsatisfied salaries can be negatively influenced the delivery of their service in optimal.

Conclusion: Knowledge and practices on infection control among hospital cleaners are moderate. Identified gaps in knowledge and practices imply the need for more effective and frequent training programs on principles of infection control. Thus, addressing for barriers while providing in-service education on infection control measures for hospital cleaners are recommended for preventing HAIs.

Keywords: Hospital cleaners, Infection control, Knowledge, Practices, Barriers

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