

Assessment of Urban Immunization Practices among Urban Mother's in Sri Lanka

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Abstract : Although vaccine coverage in Sri Lanka is close to 100%, with the widely spreading vaccine rejection trend reaching South Asian regions, it is essential to catch on whether Sri Lankans are being misinformed from the common misconceptions regarding vaccines. As the rates of target diseases decrease, parents become less accepting of even minor common adverse events. It is essential to preserve the integrity of immunization programs and protect public health by finding out the prevalence of anti-immunization trends. The primary objective of this study was to assess the immunization practices and prevalence of trends related to anti-immunization among urban community in Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional quantitative study on 323 participants using convenient sampling with 213 self-administered questionnaires. Additionally, 110 online questionnaires were distributed. 31% of the study population does not maintain immunization records for their children. While majority seek information regarding immunization from reliable sources such as the family physician or specialist pediatricians, 30% also refer to unreliable sources such as online communities for their opinion. 31% of study population had not vaccinated for Japanese encephalitis. 73% of the study population had encountered with side effects of vaccination such as fever & 47% believed that such side effects are rare. 52% of the population had hostile attitude regarding the administration of several doses multiple vaccines within a child's first year. Diseases like polio had been successfully eradicated from Sri Lanka with the help of vigorous vaccination programs. However, majority of the study population believe that there's no need to keep vaccinating the children for those eradicated diseases and exposing the child for adverse effects of such vaccines. Majority of the population were aware of the existing misconceptions regarding immunization. The most popular misconceptions about vaccines popular among the study population were the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine being a possible cause leading to autism and bowel disease and children getting infected with the disease even after they get vaccinated, may be due to the inactivated vaccine. Disturbingly 22% of the study population believed that vaccines are useless in preventing diseases nowadays. These data obtained from the urban study population reveals that even though statistically Sri Lankan immunization coverage is 100%, there is a possibility of anti-vaccination trend arising in Sri Lanka due to the prevalence of various misconceptions and rumors related to it. Therefore these data recommend the need for thorough awareness among the mothers.

Keywords : anti-vaccination, immunization, infectious diseases, pediatric health

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