

A Study on Consumer Awareness, Safety Perceptions and Practices About Food Preservatives and Flavouring Agents Used in Packed / Canned Foods from South India

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Abstract : Introduction: The increasing use of preservatives and flavouring agents has the potential to cause health problem among the people. There are no published studies from India exploring the awareness, safety perception, & practices about Food Preservatives (FPs) and Flavouring Agents (FAs). So this study was conducted with the objectives of assessing the awareness, safety perceptions & practices about Food Preservatives (FPs), Flavouring Agents (FAs) in commonly bought / purchased packed food items. Materials & method: This cross-sectional study was conducted in January 2012. Sample size of 126 was computed using the formula for infinite population. People who bought packed food items in malls were approached and requested to fill a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire explored awareness, safety perception & practices of FPs & FAs. Data was then analyzed using SPSS version 10.0. Chi-square test was used to know if the observed differences were statistically significant. 'p' value <0.05 was considered significant. Results: Totally 123 people (males- 48.8% and females-51.2%) participated (response rate of 97.6%) in the study. Majority of the people were aware about presence of 'FPs' (91.7%) and 'FAs' (84.9%) though their knowledge was inadequate. Breakup of the study subjects according to level of awareness about FPs was as follows (%): Good (37.4), Satisfactory (40.6), Poor (22) & FAs (%): Good (49.6), Satisfactory (36) & Poor (14). Distribution according to type of practices for FPs was as follows (%): Favourable (14), Unfavourable (86) & FAs (%): Favourable (30.5), Unfavourable (69.5). There was a gap between knowledge and practices. Conclusion: Though there was awareness, the knowledge was inadequate. Unfavourable practices were observed. The gaps in the knowledge and unhealthy practices need to be addressed by public awareness campaign.

Keywords : food preservatives, flavouring agents, knowledge and practices, general population

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