

PREVALENCE OF SNAKE BITE AMONG RURAL RESIDENTS IN THE DISTRICT OF AMPARA, SRI LANKA

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Snake bite is a public health hazard to the rural residents in Sri Lanka. People living in the district of Ampara mostly engage in agricultural work and frequently suffer from snake envenoming. While some snake bite victims seek western medicine, the majority prefers traditional healing methods as first line treatment. Indoor morbidity and mortality registers represent only the victims who seek western medicine following a snake bite. Therefore, the true estimate of the current burden of snake bite is unknown. A community based cross sectional study was conducted to estimate the prevalence of snake bite in the district of Ampara. Based on the pilot study done, an expected prevalence of snake bite was calculated as 0.15. A sample of 2500 households (50 households x 50 Grama Niladhari divisions in 10 divisional secretarial divisions) was selected using a systematic random sampling method. Urban residences were excluded from the study. A pre-tested questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. Prevalence of snake bite in the preceding year, life time prevalence, and age and gender variations and mortality were analyzed using SPSS version 18. Data were collected from 8707 (1.76%) rural residents out of the 494,686 district rural population. Of them, 2146 were children below 12 years. 153 Snake bite cases (1.75%) were identified within last 12 month. Of them, 10 were children (0.46% of the child population). According to the above figures, 1750 per 100,000 populations are at risk of snake bites. The majority of snake bite victims were in the less income category (Rs. <10,000). It was estimated that 359 people from sample population (4.12%) have been snake bite victims during the last 5 years. In relation to gender, it was 60.5% of males and 39.5% of females. Peak prevalence of snake bite was showed in 31-42 age categories. A total of 816 people (9.37%) experienced snake envenoming within their entire life. Sixty six (0.76%) victims were bitten more than once during their life time. Twenty five deaths due to snake bite were reported among 2500 households in Ampara district. In conclusion, rural residents in Ampara district are relatively vulnerable to snake bites. Children are less prone to this danger. The majority of victims represent the males in working age and of poor income.

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