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PREVALENCE OF DYSPEPSIA AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

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Dyspepsia is a disorder of digestive function characterized by discomfort or heartburn and nausea. The incidence of dyspepsia is increasing unacceptably. Very few studies have been conducted in Sri Lanka to determine the prevalence of dyspepsia.

The aims of this study were to determine the prevalence of dyspepsia and known associated factors among undergraduate students of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Peradeniya.

This is a descriptive study, conducted using the simple random sampling method. Data was obtained from hundred students from three faculties who fulfilled inclusion and exclusion criteria. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather information about upper abdominal symptoms, risk factors and treatment options for dyspepsia. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethical committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya. Informed written consent was obtained from the participants. Data was entered into a Ms Excel 2007 worksheet and analyzed using standard statistical methods.

Prevalence of dyspepsia among undergraduates in the Faculties of Allied Health Sciences, Arts and Agriculture was 71%, 45% and 33% respectively. A significantly higher prevalence of dyspepsia ($P < 0.002$) among undergraduates in the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences was observed compared to the other two faculties. Female students showed a higher prevalence of dyspepsia than male students of the three faculties, and it was found to be 55% and 45% respectively. There was no statistically significant difference between the prevalence of dyspepsia among male and female undergraduates ($p > 0.05$). The reported prevalence of known associated factors of dyspepsia were; use of some medications 12.8%, stress 49%, hypersensitivity or allergies to food 22.1%, consumption of alcohol 14.8%, cigarette smoking 7.4%, excessive use of coffee and/or tea 26.2% and delaying meals 58.4%. Consumption of spicy foods, acidic foods and fatty foods were found to be at 63%, 52.3% and 76.5% respectively. Epigastric discomfort, burning sensation in the stomach, heartburn and nausea were the most prominent symptoms identified among dyspeptic students.

Psychological stress due to exams and high workload, consumption of spicy, fatty and acidic foods and missing and delaying meals are the main contributing factors identified among undergraduate students.