

**ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING  
PENTAVALENT IMMUNIZATION AMONGST MOTHERS IN THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH DIVISION OF ARANAYAKE**

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The Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) is recognized as the most cost effective health intervention worldwide. Two million vaccine preventable deaths occur worldwide a year with more than half occurring in developing countries. However, in Sri Lanka the WHO/ UNICEF estimate of immunization coverage is 99%. Yet with the recent spate of media hysteria with regard to vaccine related morbidity and mortality and the quality of vaccines there was fear that immunization coverage would decline. This study is a descriptive assessment of the knowledge and perception amongst mothers in the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) division of Aranayake with regard to immunization.

A total of 175 participants, a maximum of 10 mothers from a single Public Health Midwife (PHM) area were recruited following written informed consent. An interviewer administered questionnaire was the research tool utilized.

The mean age of mothers was  $29.6 \pm 5.7$  years (range 17 to 43 years). Education level was G. C. E Ordinary level in 51% and G. C. E. Advanced level in 36%, with the remaining 13% having a less than G. C. E Ordinary level education. The number of children per mother ranged from 1 (43%) to 6 (0.6%). Overall correct responses ( $\geq 3/5$ ) to questions regarding knowledge of diseases covered by vaccines were given by 75% of the study population, while knowledge on adverse reactions to vaccines was given by 56%. Seventy seven percent (77%) of mothers knew the correct age for the relevant vaccines and 99% of mothers were aware of the first person who needs to be contacted in the event of an adverse reaction. Ninety four percent (94%) of mothers considered seeking medical advice prior to the next vaccination when there was a previous history of allergic response to vaccines. Ninety eight percent (98%) of mothers were satisfied with the quality of vaccines and 57% categorised the perceived danger of vaccination to be rarely dangerous. There was no significant correlation between age of mother, number of children, educational levels and the overall knowledge regarding vaccines.

In conclusion the study revealed that the majority of study participants had a basic knowledge regarding vaccines, but lacked knowledge of adverse reactions. The trend was of overall acceptance of vaccination as a component of the child health and well being. Therefore, education regarding vaccines including possible adverse effects must be advocated in all public health clinics.