

AWARENESS AMONG SCHOOL ATHLETES OF KANDY ZONE ABOUT “THE HANDLING AND TRANSFERRING TECHNIQUES OF A SUSPECTED SPINAL CORD INJURED ATHLETE”

R.M.I.M. Weerasekara^{1*}, B.M.H.S.K. Banneheka² and T. Sivananthawerl³

¹Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

²Department of Basic Sciences, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

³Department of Crop Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

**isankweerasekara@yahoo.com*

Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) is defined as an injury to the spinal cord and cauda-equina, resulting in temporary or permanent loss of sensory and/or motor function below the level of lesion. Even though spinal cord injuries are not very common in sports it still carries morbidity, limiting the day to day activities of the athlete because of the altered quality of life that often accompanies such an injury. Management of SCI begins at the site of the accident. Proper techniques in handling and transferring of the patient immediately after the trauma help to prevent further neurological damage. Therefore, awareness on the proper techniques of early management of a spinal cord injured patient avoids unnecessary complications. The focus of this research was to evaluate the awareness about proper handling and transferring techniques of patients with a SCI among school athletes.

Self-administered questionnaires were randomly distributed among 243 school athletes (12-20 years) of both genders (males-50.2%, females-49.8%) in randomly selected 10 national schools in the Kandy educational zone. Single total score representing the level of awareness, was given out of 25 after evaluating the answers given by each athlete. These marks were compared according to the gender, age, level of engagement and duration of engagement in sports. Mann Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used in analysis.

Majority of the students (43.62%) scored 41-60. The number of students who have scored 20-41 (23.45%) are more or less similar to the number of students (26.74%) scoring 61-80. However, only a few students (0.41%) scored higher than 80. Results of non-parametric analysis revealed that, there was no relation with the awareness (score) and the gender (male and female), age groups (below O/L, O/L and A/L), Level of engagement (inter house, zonal, divisional, district, provincial, all island, national and international). However, significant difference was noted with the duration of experience in the sports field (less than one year, 1-5 years and more than 5 years), at 0.05 significance level. Overall awareness level of the questions based on handling and transferring techniques was moderate. However, the results also revealed that there was an inadequate level of awareness regarding the handling of some emergency situations. Especially awareness level should be upgraded on how to lift the patient from the injury site, procedures to be followed if the patient wears a helmet or if the patient is under water. Further studies with a wider population should be conducted. Also awareness level of the sport officials and the teachers on the same subject area should be evaluated as they are responsible for transfer of this knowledge to the students. Results of this study stresses the need of programmes to raise the awareness of handling patients with traumatic spinal cord injury among school athletes and other high risk groups.