

## AN ANALYSIS OF MEDICO LEGAL FUNCTIONS RENDERED BY NON SPECIALIST MEDICAL OFFICERS IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

**Induwara Gooneratne, P. Dayaratne, M.A.M. Munasighe and K. Premasinghe**

*Department of Forensic Medicine, University of Peradeniya*

### **Introduction**

Many government medical officers in Sri Lanka are expected by law to perform all medico-legal duties even though they may not get a practical exposure of all medico-legal functions in their undergraduate curriculum. District Medical Officer (DMO), Medical Officer In Charge (MO-IC), MO-Medico Legal are some non specialist positions in the Ministry of Health that perform medico-legal functions. There are no formal training provided to these officers to perform medico-legal functions other than what they learnt in the undergraduate curriculum (Chandrasiri, 2002; Gooneratne and Edussuriya, 2007). There have been no studies to identify the varying medico-legal functions performed by non specialist medical officers in Sri Lanka. Therefore this study was designed to understand the varying types, nature and extent of medico-legal duties non specialist medical officers perform in Sri Lanka and their training needs.

### **Materials and Methods**

All non specialist medical officers required to perform medico-legal work in the central province in Sri Lanka were included in the study and they were interviewed via telephone

using a structured questionnaire. Interview type research using telephone conversations with participants have been used as effective research method in the literature.

### **Results and Discussion**

Out of the total sample of 35 medical officers who responded, 97% have provided medico-legal functions. They have had no post graduate qualifications in Forensic Medicine and 80% had no official training in Forensic Medicine other than the undergraduate training. They have performed medico-legal functions in advanced cases including rape/sexual abuse, trauma, drunken and alcoholism, child abuse, accidents, drug addiction.

Many have not been exposed to examining a raped victim or drunken victim in their undergraduate training although they encounter them in their non specialist medico-legal duties. These seem to be important training needs.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, many non specialist medical officers perform medico-legal work. The undergraduate course seems not to address hands on clinical

aspects of some of the important forensic cases non specialist medical officers encounter. Therefore either the undergraduate curriculum or a refresher course ought to address their training needs.

### Reference

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