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**ATTITUDES AND DIFFERENT PRACTICES RELATED TO ABNORMAL
VAGINAL DISCHARGE AMONG WOMEN LIVING IN AN ESTATE
COMMUNITY IN SRI LANKA**

Ilankoon, I.M.P.S¹, Goonewardena, C.S.E², Fernandopulle, R.C³ and Perera, P.P.R⁴

¹*Department of Allied Health Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*

³*Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*

⁴*Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*

ABSTRACT

Vaginal discharge is known to cause distress, embarrassment and discomfort in women in reproductive age. This community based cross sectional study was aimed at describing the attitudes and different practices associated with vaginal discharge among females living in estate communities. Data were collected using a self-developed, validated, pretested interviewer-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used in analysis. A total of 550 women participated and the mean age was 33.8 (SD± 8.15) years. There were 36% Indian Tamils and 41.8% Sri Lankan Tamils. Nearly half of the population had primary education (n= 312, 56.7%). Majority (N=509, 92.5%) agreed that "it is necessary to take treatment for offensive vaginal discharge" indicating positive attitudes. Majority displayed negative attitudes towards health seeking namely "any type of vaginal discharge is a normal condition" (N= 429, 78%), "excessive vaginal discharge can occur due to body" (N= 411, 74.7%), "It is uncomfortable to talk about vaginal discharge" (N=262, 47.6%). Nearly 70% of them agreed that they have experienced vaginal discharge and only 30% of them have sought medical treatment. Main home remedies used were polpala herbal drink (31.3%), king coconut (26.0%) and sago (Sauw) kanji (26.0%). The reasons for not seeking medical advice were "difficulty discussing with male doctors" (N=483, 87.8%), "less knowledgeable about vaginal discharge" (N=253, 46%) and "considering vaginal discharge as normal" (N=179, 32.5%). The findings implies a need of improving awareness and the available support system for this socially marginalized community in order to improve the health seeking behaviours towards excessive vaginal discharge.

Keywords: vaginal discharge, health seeking behaviours, attitudes