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Study on Knowledge and Attitude on Examination of Patients for Drunkenness among Ordinary Medical Officers Involved in such Examinations

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Introduction: Drunkenness has been identified as a major contributor for violence. When a police officer suspects a person to be under the influence of alcohol, opinion of a government medical officer is sorted. On the other hand, opinion of the clinicians written for management purposes may sometimes be considered by the courts. Therefore, knowledge and attitude of doctors regarding examination for drunkenness play a crucial role in administration of justice.

Objective: *To study about knowledge and attitudes on examination of patients for drunkenness among doctors who are engaging in such examinations with no special training in performing medico-legal duties.*

Study design: A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted using an interviewer administered questionnaire. Their knowledge and attitudes towards such examinations were assessed by comprehensive questions and subjects scoring $\geq 75\%$ were considered as having 'satisfactory' knowledge.

Results: Out of the 218 doctors participated in the study, 56% had <5year service. All of them were at the initial patient encounters such as MO-OPD/ MO-ETU/ House Officer. Majority of them had frequently encountered examination of drunkenness (91%). Only 58% self-rated their knowledge on examination for drunkenness as satisfactory but knowledge on performing tests of drunkenness, interpretation and formulating opinion were satisfactory only in 30% (n=65) of them. Majority (85%) of them had gained such knowledge during their undergraduate training. There was no significant association ($p=0.941$) of the duration of service with knowledge in procedure. Majority (95%) of them preferred to participate in CPD activities to sharpen their knowledge.

Conclusion: The unsatisfactory level of knowledge of Medical Officers with no special training in medico-legal work, can adversely affect the results of examination for drunkenness hence leading to wrongful convictions. Thus, it is high time to fill the gaps in their knowledge through special professional training programs and by introduction of a guideline.