

## OP 9

### **Knowledge and attitudes regarding the inquest procedure in Sri Lanka among patients attending the outpatient departments of selected hospitals in the Colombo District**

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**Background:** Inquest procedure is a legally mandatory procedure which is carried out to establish the identity of the deceased person and the cause, manner, and circumstances of death. It is the opinion among Judicial Medical Officers that the general public have limited knowledge and a negative attitude regarding the inquest procedure.

**Objective:** To describe the knowledge and attitudes regarding the inquest procedure and their associated factors among patients attending the outpatient departments of selected hospitals in Colombo District.

**Method:** A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted among 94 patients, selected using systematic random sampling, attending the outpatient departments of Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Jayewardenepura General Hospital, and Homagama Base Hospital, over a period of two months. An interviewer-administered questionnaire (in-house) was used to assess the knowledge, attitudes and associated socio-demographic factors. Possible range for knowledge and attitude scores were 0-100, and a score  $\geq 50$  was categorised as “good” and  $< 50$  categorised as “poor”. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26.0. Correlation, t-test and Chi squared was used to assess significance where  $p < 0.05$  was taken as significant.

**Results:** The mean age of participants was  $46.6 \pm 17.1$  years with 60.6% (n=57) being males. Mean scores for knowledge and attitude were  $58.9 \pm 18.5$  and  $76.2 \pm 22.9$  respectively. There was a significant positive correlation between age and the level of knowledge ( $r=0.27$ ,  $p=0.008$ ). Higher educational level showed a significant association with positive attitude ( $t=2.12$ ,  $p=0.036$ ) whereas participants with personal experiences had a significantly negative attitude towards the inquest procedure ( $t=7.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Age was positively correlated with knowledge. Higher educational level was associated with a positive attitude but participants with personal experiences had a significantly negative attitude towards the inquest procedure. Reasons for negative attitude towards the inquest procedure among those who had past experiences need to be further explored and addressed.