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**Awareness and practices on the use of personal protective equipment among nursing officers of the National Hospital for respiratory diseases during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Botheju SN, Wijesinghe CP, Fernando WRSP, Gunawardene IPUNN, Chathurangi ADN, Herath HMNDM, Senarath NSASN\*, Jayamaha AR

*Faculty of Nursing, Kaatsu International University, Sri Lanka.*

**Background:** The International Council of Nurses estimated that more than 1,500 nurses have died from COVID-19 in 44 countries. Proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is vital to ensure the safety of patients and healthcare professionals. Nurses working without appropriate PPE are potentially increasing transmission and leading to reduced workforce capacity.

**Objective:** The study aimed to evaluate the awareness and practice of PPE among nurses at the National Hospital for Respiratory Diseases (NHRD) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Method:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire among all the nurses who work at NHRD. Participants who scored  $\geq 70\%$ , were considered as satisfactory. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.0 and Ethical approval (KIU/ERC/20/51) was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of KIU.

**Results:** Among 135 respondents, the majority (90%) were females with a mean age of  $32 \pm 6$  years. The majority (88%) of the nurses were diploma holders and 76% had working experience for more than one year. The awareness towards using PPE was unsatisfactory among 89% of participants and 92% never participated in special training programs on PPE. Despite unsatisfactory knowledge, 78% of nurses reported good overall practice of proper use of PPE. Lack of knowledge (90%) and training (91%), PPE shortage (91%), physical discomfort (90%), fogging goggles (80%), and latex allergy (87%) were the perceived common barriers that led to lack of awareness and poor practices.

**Conclusion:** The study revealed that poor awareness of the proper use of PPE. However, most of the nurses adhered to good practice. Strategies need to be taken to uplift the awareness and poor aspects of the practice. The periodic, in-service education and training sessions may fill the knowledge gaps and improve the practice on proper use of PPE.