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## **Knowledge and attitudes towards the elderly and elderly care among nursing undergraduates in selected Universities of Sri Lanka**

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**Background:** With the increased number of people aged 60 years and older, the health and social systems will have to be prepared to ensure their health. Nurses being key healthcare professionals, there is a huge need for undergraduate nursing students to develop themselves for delivering quality healthcare to elders.

**Objective:** This study aimed at assessing knowledge and attitudes towards elderly and elderly care among nursing undergraduates and the factors associated.

**Method:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a convenience sample of 220 students of the second, third and fourth academic years of University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ (n=62), University of Jaffna (n=58) and Kotelawala Defence University (n=100). A pre-tested, self-administered structured questionnaire which consisted of questions on socio-demographics (7), knowledge on elderly and ageing (20) and attitudes towards elderly and elderly care (30) from the Kogan's attitude scale was used. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and One-way ANOVA test. Knowledge was categorized in-house as: good (14-17), average (11-13), and poor (7-10), and attitudes as positive (116-131), neutral (100-115) and negative (84-99) according to mean overall scores.

**Results:** The response rate was 73.6%. Of the participants, 92(41.8%) reported that they have not learnt about elderly care. Of the participants 106 (48.2%) had an average knowledge level, 90 (40.9%) had good knowledge, and 24 (10.9%) had poor knowledge on elderly and elderly care. Positive attitudes were evident among 47(21.4%), neutral attitudes among 158 (71.8%), and negative attitudes among 15 (6.8%). There was a significant difference in mean attitude scores between universities ( $p=0.03$ ) and a significant difference in mean knowledge scores between the universities ( $p<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The majority of undergraduates showed average knowledge and most had neutral attitudes on elderly and elderly care. Nursing education programs should focus on including content on elderly care with relevant clinical exposure to enhance positive attitudes among undergraduates.