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MYTHS AND BELIEFS RELATED TO DELAYED PRESENTATION WITH CHICKEN POX AMONG SRI LANKAN ADULTS

Amarasena N.C.K., Wickramasinghe W.A.A.S., Munasinghe M.A.L.T.,
Athukorala T.S.P.P., Senanayake K.I.D.F.* and Munidas K.G.P.K.

Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences,
The Open University of Sri Lanka
fernandokid91@gmail.com

Abstract

Chicken pox is a global disease caused by the virus, varicella-zoster. Many people practice traditional curative methods for chicken pox and delays seeking medical advice due to myths and beliefs regarding the progress of disease. Therefore, we decided to identify common myths and beliefs related to delayed presentation of chicken pox. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at the Isolation Unit of National Institute of Infectious Disease (NIID), Angoda. Two hundred and fifty adult patients infected with chicken pox were recruited to the study using convenience sampling. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The majority of participants (90%, n=225) had not taken any medical advice prior to hospital admission with chicken pox. Most participants 85.6% (n=214) believed that chicken pox is given by God and it is necessary to give offerings to get rid of the disease (82.8%, n=207). More than half (58.8%, n=147) of the participants believed that it is not good to bathe during the first seven days when infected with chickenpox. Many (60.4%, n=151) believed that taking medication would suppress the disease while more than half (53.6%) believed that they should wait without taking medicine and allow the disease to recover spontaneously. The majority of Sri Lankan adults follow traditional treatments for chicken pox and most of them still adhere to myths and beliefs related to chicken pox which showed an influence for delayed seeking medication. Hence, it is highly recommended that awareness programmes enhancing the importance of early medication seeking behavior for chicken pox should be introduced to the community in order to improve their knowledge and minimize common myths/beliefs related to chicken pox.

Keywords: Myths, Beliefs, Delay in Seeking Medical Advice, Chicken pox, Sri Lankan adults