

Screening communities for serum cholesterol and blood glucose: a viable option

Non-communicable diseases are on the increase in Sri Lanka. Realizing this fact the Western Province allocated funds for screening adults for total serum cholesterol levels and blood glucose levels. Medical Officers of Health (MOOH) were expected to implement the screening program in their communities.

Organizing special screening campaigns for this purpose did not seem to be productive considering the cost and the manpower involved. In the Ragama Medical Officer of Health area, government sponsored Community Health Service campaigns such as Praja Suvaseva and Gama Neguma were

used as vehicles for screening for serum cholesterol and blood glucose among other services provided in these campaigns. Special programs were also held targeting school teachers, police personnel and local government personnel. Clear instructions were given on the duration of fasting prior to testing.

Results

Using already operational programs such as Praja Suwaseva and Gamaneguma was found to be feasible and cost effective in screening for cholesterol and blood glucose without using additional personnel. The results of the screening programs are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Status of serum cholesterol levels of selected residents of MOH area Ragama

Community	Normal Cholesterol <200mg/dl	Elevated Cholesterol >200mg/dl	Total
Local government personnel	69	64	133
Police personnel	19	14	33
Ihalagama community	34	22	56
Podiweekumbura community	22	8	30
Total	144	108	252

Among those who had elevated cholesterol 67 (62.1%) were females. The age group that reported highest proportion of persons (37.0%) with elevated cholesterol was 41-50 years.

Table 2: Status of capillary blood glucose levels of selected residents of MOH area Ragama

Community	Normal Capillary Blood Sugar <120mg/dl	Elevated Capillary Blood Sugar >120mg/dl	Total
Local government personnel	150	26	176
Police personnel	26	7	33
Ihalagama community	52	12	64
Podiweekumbura community	24	11	35
Total	252	56	308

Forty one percent of the persons with elevated capillary blood glucose were in the age group of 41-50 years and 55.4% of them were females.

All those who had higher levels of serum cholesterol and capillary blood sugar were advised on life style modification by the staff of the MOH.

This example indicates that convenient samples of populations can be screened for serum cholesterol and capillary blood sugar with currently existing facilities. Existing programs of community health development

initiated by political patronage can be used as a platform for this purpose.

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