

Knowledge, attitude, and practices of sugar intake among medical students of the University of Jaffna

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Introduction: Sweet foods have become a favourite among all age groups. Consuming sweetened beverages, confectionary items and bakery foods are a trend in Jaffna. Nowadays youngsters consume processed foods that contain a high sugar level, associated with various adverse health effects. Sugar intake among medical students is influenced by their busy schedule, stress levels, eating behaviours, childhood upbringing, and the undesirable increase in the availability of sugary items. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices of sugar intake and their associated sociodemographic factors among medical students of the University of Jaffna.

Methods: In this descriptive cross-sectional study, 427 medical students participated from the University of Jaffna. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Sociodemographic factors associated with knowledge, attitude, and practice towards sugar intake were analyzed using the chi-square test.

Results: Mean age of the study sample was 24.6 years. In the sample, 63.7% did not know the recommended daily sugar intake, but they were aware of the association between sugar intake and dental caries (93.4%) as well as weight gain (92.7%); 51.5% of students reported that they consumed biscuits daily. There was a significant association between knowledge and programme phase ($p=0.001$) and age ($p=0.006$). There was a significant association between sex and attitude ($p=0.039$). There was no significant association between age and practice ($p=0.075$).

Conclusion: Jaffna medical students possess a good level of knowledge and favourable attitudes regarding selected aspects of sugar intake, but their practices of sugar intake are poor. As medical students, they should avoid sugar, and pay more attention to updating their knowledge and developing favourable attitudes and practices towards sugar intake in order to maintain their health.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Sugar Intake, Medical Student, University of Jaffna.