



5th Biennial Academic Sessions 2026

**Graduate Nurses' Foundation of Sri Lanka
(GNFSL)**

**“Empowering the Nursing Workforce: Advancing Practice, Education and
Public Health”**

On

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF GUEST

PRESIDENT, ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SRI LANKA



It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest greetings to the Graduate Nurses Foundation of Sri Lanka (GNFSL) on the occasion of its 5th Biennial Academic Sessions.

Nursing is the cornerstone of a strong and effective healthcare system. Nurses not only provide essential care to patients but also play a pivotal role in shaping healthcare policies, promoting public health initiatives, and advancing the overall quality of care delivered to our communities. In this context, empowering the nursing workforce is not only an investment in professional development but a strategic commitment to the health and well-being of the nation.

This Biennial Academic Sessions provide a unique and valuable platform for graduate nurses to come together to share knowledge, exchange best practices, and engage in dialogue on the latest advancements in clinical practice, education, and public health. By fostering continuous learning, innovation, and collaboration, the Graduate Nurses Foundation of Sri Lanka is playing a critical role in strengthening the professional capacity of nurses across the country.

The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA) highly values the contribution made by the nursing profession to national development and public health. The Graduate Nurses Foundation’s dedication to promoting research, education, and professional excellence among its members is both commendable and timely. This Biennial Academic Sessions will undoubtedly provide a meaningful platform for dialogue, innovation, and the exchange of best practices that will further uplift our healthcare system.

I congratulate the Graduate Nurses Foundation of Sri Lanka for its commitment to professional excellence and for organizing this important event. I am confident that the discussions, presentations, and networking opportunities provided during this session will inspire new ideas, promote professional excellence, and further elevate the standards of nursing practice in Sri Lanka.

I extend my heartfelt best wishes to all participants for a fruitful and inspiring Biennial Academic Sessions. May your deliberations empower the nursing workforce and contribute meaningfully to advancing healthcare and public wellbeing in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Jayantha Gallehewa

President

Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA)

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF NURSING (MEDICAL SERVICES)



It is with great pleasure that I extend my warm greetings to the Graduate Nurses’ Foundation of Sri Lanka (GNFSL) on the occasion of its 5th Biennial Academic Sessions and Annual General Meeting. I commend the organizers for selecting the timely and relevant theme, “Empowering the Nursing Workforce: Advancing Practice, Education, and Public Health.”

Nurses play a pivotal role in strengthening healthcare systems and ensuring quality patient care. Empowering the nursing workforce through continuous professional development, research, and leadership is essential to meet the evolving healthcare needs of our nation. This academic forum provides an excellent platform for knowledge sharing, innovation, and professional collaboration.

I am confident that the deliberations and scholarly contributions presented during this conference will significantly contribute to the advancement of nursing practice and public health services in Sri Lanka. The publication of these proceedings will serve as a valuable reference for nurses, educators, and healthcare professionals alike.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Graduate Nurses’ Foundation of Sri Lanka for its continued commitment to professional excellence and capacity building within the nursing community. I wish the conference every success and look forward to its meaningful outcomes.

Mrs. M.B.C. Samanmalie
Director of Nursing (Medical Services)
Ministry of Health

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR
5th BIENNIAL ACADEMIC SESSIONS - 2026

GRADUATE NURSES’ FOUNDATION OF SRI LANKA



It is with great pleasure and honour to present this message to the 5th Biennial Academic Sessions 2026, organized by the Graduate Nurses’ Foundation of Sri Lanka (GNFSL), a significant event during my tenure as President of the Foundation and Chairperson of the Academic Sessions.

The theme of the 5th Biennial Academic Sessions is “Empowering the Nursing Workforce: Advancing Practice, Education, and Public Health.” As one of the two existing professional nursing organizations in Sri Lanka, empowering nurses to deliver safe and high-quality care through evidence based practice, while also motivating and supporting them to engage in research, is one of our core responsibilities. Since its inception in 2003, GNFSL has been working tirelessly to foster a strong research culture among nurses and to empower them to actively participate in nursing research.

I strongly believe that our Biennial Academic Sessions provide a vibrant platform for nurses to share their research findings, strengthen research competencies, and contribute to the scientific community. This year, we received 27 abstracts spanning five key themes: Trends in Nursing; Nursing Education and Professional Development; Nursing Practice; Public Health Nursing; and Nursing Leadership and Management. Following a rigorous and comprehensive review process, 18 high-quality abstracts were carefully selected. These will be presented through two oral presentation sessions and one poster presentation session, reflecting both the diversity and the scholarly strength of our nursing community.

The keynote address of the 5th Biennial academic sessions will be delivered by Professor M. K. D. L. Meegoda, a distinguished academic from the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. She will share her vast expertise with us.

Due to the immense efforts of the Secretary, Conference Secretaries, and Scientific Committee members, who served with exceptional dedication and commitment, we have been able to successfully conduct this academic event. My sincere gratitude also goes to the reviewers for their dedication to maintaining the highest academic standards throughout the review process.

A special note of thanks goes to all the sponsors of the 5th Biennial Conference for their generous financial support. I am truly grateful for the collective efforts of the Executive Committee and the Organizing Committee, whose unity and dedication have made this conference a reality.

I sincerely hope that the technical sessions will be fruitful and enriching for all participants. I wish all presenters every success in their presentations and extend my best wishes to everyone for a rewarding academic experience.

Thank you.

Dr. M.R.S. Jayathilake

Chairperson, 5th Biennial Academic Sessions 2026

President, GNFSL

**MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY,
5th BIENNIAL ACADEMIC SESSIONS - 2026**

GRADUATE NURSES’ FOUNDATION OF SRI LANKA



As the secretary of the 5th Biennial Academic Sessions, 2026 of the Graduate Nurses’ Foundation of Sri Lanka (GNFSL), it is my great pleasure to extend a heartfelt welcome to all of you. This conference theme is “Empowering the Nursing Workforce: Advancing Practice, Education, and Public Health,” and it represents an important step towards achieving excellence in healthcare.

The Graduate Nurses’ Foundation of Sri Lanka conducts this conference once every two years to disseminate research works of staff nurses, nursing academics, and their students. The nature of our academic sessions offers an exciting connecting network and platform where presenters can share their findings with research experts, their peers, and stakeholders.

As we gather for the 5th Biennial Academic Sessions, I am sure that the wide variety of topics will encourage strong discussions, which will lead to opportunities for cooperation and increased understanding of health-based issues, further research, and better chances of improved health and well-being across our society.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organizing committee of the 5th Biennial Academic Sessions, who dedicated themselves to the success of the event. Their commitment reflects the shared passion we have for advancing nursing practice through research.

All presenters, I send you best wishes as you take the stage to give us your invaluable contributions. May your insights inspire a brighter future in healthcare.

I am grateful and wish good luck to all the presenters.

Dr. H.S.M.S.K. Wijesiri

Secretary/ 5th Biennial Academic Sessions -2026

Secretary/ GNFSL

MESSAGE FROM THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Workforce Empowerment in Nursing: A Cost-Effective Strategy for Quality and Sustainability



The global nursing workforce is experiencing unprecedented strain due to rising healthcare demands, demographic shifts, workforce aging, and persistent shortages. Within this context, empowering nurses is no longer optional but a strategic necessity for strengthening healthcare systems and improving patient outcomes. Empowerment could be mainly done through structural, psychological, and rational empowerment. Structural empowerment refers to organizational conditions that provide nurses with access to resources, information, support, and opportunities for professional growth. Expanding the scope of practice, particularly through advanced practice and independent nursing roles, enables nurses to function at the top of their competencies while improving care accessibility and efficiency. In parallel, investment in digital literacy and technology integration, including telehealth, electronic health records optimization, and data-driven care models, enhances clinical decision-making and broadens service delivery, particularly in remote populations. Psychological empowerment focuses on fostering autonomy, meaning, and impact within professional roles. When nurses perceive their work as meaningful and feel confident in critical thinking and clinical judgment, their job satisfaction increases and decreases burnout. Relational empowerment, grounded in collaborative practice and shared governance, while inclusive leadership, strengthens inter-professional trust and promotes shared decision-making. These relational dynamics are central to cultivating psychologically safe environments where nurses can voice concerns, innovate, and contribute to quality improvement initiatives without fear of retribution.

Education and lifelong learning represent foundational pillars of empowerment. Strengthening undergraduate curricula to emphasize leadership, informatics, and public health competencies prepares nurses for increasingly complex healthcare environments to face any unexpected situations. Continuous professional development, specialty certification, mentorship, and preceptorship programs further reinforce clinical competence and career progression. Structured career pathways and transparent promotion systems enhance retention and professional engagement. Organizational responsibility extends beyond compensation to the creation of supportive work environments. Creating ergonomically safe workplaces, manageable workloads, mental health support systems, and recognition frameworks contribute to overall well-being.

Community-based care, including community outreach practices, preventive health services, and emergency preparedness are additional domain where empowered nurses play critical roles in the community. These domains empower nurses to have decision-making authority and cultural competence, which can tailor interventions to the specific social, cultural, and cost-effective practices of the population they serve. Building trust through these effective practices may help to improve community participation, which in turn decreases unnecessary hospital admissions.

Strengthening and supporting the nursing workforce is not only a strategic necessity but also a moral responsibility, forming the foundation of a fair and inclusive healthcare system with high-quality including principles of fairness, honesty, and integrity. Furthermore, lower turnover, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous learning foster resilient systems capable of adapting to evolving healthcare needs of different populations. Additionally, strengthening research capacity among nurses through dedicated funding initiatives will expand the body of healthcare literature, promote evidence-based practice, and support the continued globalization and advancement of nursing practice.

Ultimately, empowerment directly correlates with improved nurse motivation through several mechanisms. Increased autonomy, enhanced self-efficacy, participation in decision making, professional growth opportunities, recognition and respect, improved work environment, and stronger organisational commitment. When nurses are empowered to make clinical decisions and manage their work independently within their professional framework, they experience greater professional control. This autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Most importantly, empowerment builds confidence in skills and competencies. Nurses who believe in their ability to provide high-quality care are more motivated to perform effectively. Involvement in organizational and clinical decisions fosters a sense of ownership, value within the healthcare team, increasing commitment and motivation. Access to training, leadership roles, and career advancement strengthens engagement and encourages continuous improvement. Empowered environments promote acknowledgment of nurses’ contributions, which reinforces morale and workplace motivation. Further empowerment reduces stress and burnout, which positively influences motivation. When nurses feel trusted and supported, they develop loyalty to the organization, leading to sustained motivation and performance

Prof. M.K.D.L. Meegoda

Prof. in Nursing and Midwifery

Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences

University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Detailed Programme – 21st February 2026

5TH BIENNIAL ACADEMIC SESSIONS- 2026 GRADUATE NURSES’ FOUNDATION OF SRI LANKA

08.30 am	Registration
09.00 am	Lighting of the Traditional Oil Lamp
09.05 am	National Anthem
09.10 am	Welcome Address by Dr. M.R.S. Jayathilake Chairperson of the 5 th Biennial Academic Sessions – 2026 /President of GNFSL.
09.15 am	Cultural Event
09.25 am	Address by the Chief Guest, Mr. Jayantha Gallehewa, President, Organization of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka
09.40 am	Keynote Address by Prof. M.K.D.L. Meegoda, Professor in Nursing and Midwifery, Department of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sri Jayewardenepura
10.05 am	Vote of Thanks by Dr. H.S.M.S.K. Wijesiri Secretary/ 5 th Biennial Academic Sessions - 2026
10.10 am	Refreshments
10.45 am	Technical Sessions
01.15 pm	Awarding Certificates & Closing the Ceremony
02.00 pm	Annual General Meeting of GNFSL

TECHNICAL SESSIONS – ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Parallel Session 01- Oral Presentations (OP 01-OP 06) (10.45 am to 12.15 pm) Chairperson: Prof. S.S.P. Warnakulasuriya Panel Members: Prof. M.K.D.L. Meegoda, Dr. K.A. Sriyani		
10.45 am – 11.00 am	OP 01	Digital Health Literacy, its Attitudes and Associated Factors towards Digital Health among Nursing Undergraduates in Selected State Universities in the Colombo District <i>Miralini, L., Jayathilake, M.R.S.#</i>
11.00 am – 11.15 am	OP 02	Assessment of Quality of Life and its Associated Factors among Older Adults Living in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Kesbawa Divisional Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka <i>Appuhamy, H.M.L.R.#, Karunarathna, H.K.L., Pandithrathna, D.Y.B., Kavindhi, B.R., Samaranayke, P.D.L.A., Wijesiri, H.S.M.S.K.</i>
11.15 am – 11.30 am	OP 03	Cultural Adaptation and Psychometric Validation of the Sinhala Version of the Osteoporosis Health Belief Scale <i>Dias, H.#, Rathnayake, N.</i>
11.30 am – 11.45 am	OP 04	Barriers in Accessing Reproductive Health Care Services by Teenage Mothers in Galle District: Perspectives of Healthcare Providers <i>Lakjaya, R.P.B.#, Gayathri, J.A.O., Wanigathunga, D.M.I., Dias, M.P.H.K., Perera, B.</i>
11.45 am – 12.00 Noon	OP 05	Knowledge, Perceptions, and Preventive Behaviours on Leptospirosis among Patients: A Hospital-Based Study from Monaragala District, Sri Lanka <i>Madhuwanthi, N.G.S., Vithanage, K.V.D.S.R., Rathnayake, R.M.M.N., De Silva, D.Y.W.D., Arachchi, A.M.N., Abeyrathna, W.M.D.N.#, Madhuwanthi, R.M.</i>
12.00 Noon – 12.15 pm	OP 06	Cognitive Function Levels and Associated Factors among Institutionalised Elderly Population in Galle District – A Cross-Sectional Study <i>Tharuka, H.P.M.P.M.#, Shashinika, D.P, Kumara, S.A.T.R., Sundarapperuma, S.M.T.D, Tharanga, K.J.M.D.</i>

<p align="center">Parallel Session 02- Oral Presentations (OP 07 - OP 10)</p> <p align="center">(10.45 am to 12.00 Noon)</p> <p align="center">Chairperson: Dr. S.M.K.S. Seneviratne</p> <p align="center">Panel Members: Prof. R.H.M.P.N. Rathnayake, Dr. R.M.T.B. Abeyratne</p>		
11.00 am – 11.15 am	OP 07	<p>Grit, Growth Mindset, and Academic Self-efficacy in relation to Academic Performance among Nursing Undergraduates at a Defence University, Sri Lanka</p> <p><i>Weerathunga, W.R.U., Gunathilaka, A.G.R.R., Yogendra, L., Jayathilaka, K.D.C.D., Dharmadasa, P.K.D.T.N., Sudusinghe, W.S., Gamage, C.K.W.#</i></p>
11.15 am – 11.30 am	OP 08	<p>Assessment of Self-Care Practices and Barriers among Nurses in the General Hospital in Galle District: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study</p> <p><i>Rathnaweera R.A.S.D.#, Weerathna K.H.I., Dewmini B.G.V., Ubsekara N., Sundarapperuma S.M.T.D.</i></p>
11.30 am – 11.45 am	OP 09	<p>Administrative and Financial Factors Associated with Nurse Retention at Government Hospitals in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka</p> <p><i>Wijethunga, W.M.C.C.#, Thenuwara, T.H.T.N., Rajeev, G., Luxmi, K.</i></p>
11.45 am – 12.00 Noon	OP 10	<p>Awareness, Level of Experience, and Impact of Workplace Incivility among Nurses in Mawanella Hospital, Sri Lanka</p> <p><i>Athauda, P.G.S.W.K., Jayathilaka, P.A.S., Thilakarathna, B.R.C.D., Gunasekare, M.K.C.P.#, Wijesekara, G.G.W.C.</i></p>

Parallel Session 03- Poster Presentations (PP 01- PP 07) (10.45 am to 11.55 am) Chairperson: Prof. B. S. S. De Silva Panel Members: Dr. N.P. Edirisinghe, Dr. D.M.A.P. Dissanayake		
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10.55 am – 11.05 am	PP 02	Knowledge and Attitudes on Sepsis Identification and their Associated Factors among Nurses Working in Selected Wards at Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka <i>Madhushani, A.H.K.S., Jayathilake, M.R.S.#</i>
11.05 am – 11.15 am	PP 03	Knowledge, Health-seeking Behaviour, and Associated Factors regarding Dengue Fever among Adults in a Selected MOH Area in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka <i>Silva, J.A.G.S., Jayathilake, M.R.S.#</i>
11.15 am – 11.25 am	PP 04	Nurses' Attitudes towards the Importance of Family Involvement in Nursing Care and its Associated Factors in Selected State Hospitals in Sri Lanka <i>Lalindrika, P.R.C.#, Dahanayaka, N.M., Nanayakkara, L.K., Hettiarachchi, S.A., Deepthinee, W.M.C.W., Karunarathna, T.P.N.P., Kariyawasam, K.H.A.Y.</i>
11.25 am – 11.35 pm	PP 05	Severity of Eczema and its Association with Quality of Life among Patients Attending a Selected Hospital in Sri Lanka <i>Udayangani, K.M.S.T., Amarasinghe, A. A, S, D., Premarathna, M.D.N.D., Karunathilaka, A.A.D.M.W., Samanmali, E.D.S., Kanchana, K.T.G., Thilakarathna, H.M.C.R.K.#</i>
11.35 pm – 11.45 pm	PP 06	Burden among Family Caregivers of Children Diagnosed with Cancer in a Selected Hospital, Sri Lanka <i>Srimali, B.H.R., Nadishani, N.G.M., Thilakarathna, H.H.D., Lakmali, P.O.N., Kathriarachchi, K.A.T.D., Abeyrathna, W.M.D.N.#, Madhuwanthi, R.M.</i>
11.45 am – 11.55 am	PP 07	Social Media Usage among School Adolescents in Selected Schools in Warakapola Medical Officer of Health Area, Sri Lanka: A Cross-Sectional Study <i>Pushpakumari, M.M.S.N., Udeshika, A.A.J., Thilakarathna, P.H.L.P., Ananda, H.M.S.S., Sriyani, K.A.#</i>

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ABSTRACTS OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS

OP 01

Digital Health Literacy, its Attitudes and Associated Factors towards Digital Health among Nursing Undergraduates in Selected State Universities in the Colombo District

Miralini, L., Jayathilake, M.R.S.#

Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Introduction: The World Health Organisation emphasises the importance of digital health education in healthcare training to improve outcomes. As the use of mobile devices and digital platforms continues to rise, it is expected that nursing professionals and students will need to increasingly develop the competencies to access these technologies. This study aimed to assess digital health literacy, attitudes, and associated factors towards digital health among nursing undergraduates in selected state Universities in the Colombo district.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in March 2025 using a quantitative approach among 422 nursing undergraduates from the University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. A stratified random sampling was used. Data were collected using a pre-tested, validated self-administered questionnaire and analysed using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics were presented as frequencies and percentages. Chi-square tests determined associations between Digital health literacy and sociodemographic factors with significance set at $p < 0.05$. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Research Committee of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Results: The response rate was 100%. Among the participants, the majority were aged between 21 and 24 (59.5%), female (76.3%), and from a semi-urban area (53.1%). Nearly half of the participants (51.9%) demonstrated an average level of knowledge on Digital health, while 10.2% exhibited poor Digital health literacy. More than two-thirds (69.4%) had a favourable attitude toward digital health, while a small proportion (0.5%) had an unfavourable attitude. Significant associations were found between digital health literacy level and age ($p = 0.005$), academic year ($p < 0.001$), and ethnicity ($p = 0.007$).

Conclusion: Nursing undergraduates in the Colombo District possess average digital health literacy with a favourable attitude towards digital health. Literacy was significantly associated with age, academic progression, and ethnicity. Future studies should include broader digital health literacy dimensions for a comprehensive understanding of digital health literacy among nursing undergraduates across the country.

Keywords: *associated factors, attitudes, digital health literacy, nursing undergraduates*

OP 02

Assessment of Quality of Life and its Associated Factors among Older Adults Living in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Kesbawa Divisional Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Quality of Life (QOL) is a key aspect of well-being among older adults, particularly those residing in residential aged care facilities (RACF). Understanding and enhancing QOL in this setting is essential to promote dignity, autonomy, and overall well-being in later life. The study aimed to assess the levels of overall and domain-specific QOL and associated factors among older adults living in RACF.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study conducted at the randomly selected RACF in Kesbawa Secretariat Division, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Older adults (n=244) aged 60 years and older were recruited using a consecutive sampling technique. The validated Sinhala version of the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire was used to assess the overall and domain-specific QOL of older adults. Ethical clearance was obtained to conduct this study from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Kotelawala Defence University. Descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression techniques were used to analyse data using SPSS version 25.0.

Results: The mean scores for physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental health were 58.18 (± 5.79), 56.85 (± 5.23), 49.12 (± 8.56), and 65.74 (± 4.97), respectively, with the overall mean value of 57.47 (± 3.651). Statistical analysis revealed that most participants in the current study reported a neutral perception of their QOL (n=165, 67.6%) and health status (n=133, 54.5%). A significant negative association with the overall QOL was noted with the extended family type ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < 0.05$), distance to elderly home from their residence is more than 10 km ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), and a poor relationship with family and friends ($\beta = -0.198$, $p < 0.01$) in the adjusted model.

Conclusions: Older adults had a moderate level of QOL, except for the social relationships domain. However, the factors predicting QOL varied for each domain. Strengthening family relationships, improving institutionalised policies for social and psychological well-being, comprehensive healthcare services, and rehabilitation programs for improving psychological well-being could enhance the QOL of older adults residing in RACF.

Keywords: *associated factors, older adults, quality of life, residential aged care facilities*

OP 03

Cultural Adaptation and Psychometric Validation of the Sinhala Version of the Osteoporosis Health Belief Scale

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Introduction: Osteoporosis is a major public health concern among postmenopausal women, as hormonal changes increase the risk of fragility fractures and long-term disability. Assessing osteoporosis-related health beliefs is vital for effective health promotion. This study aimed to culturally adapt the Osteoporosis Health Belief Scale (OHBS) into Sinhala and evaluate its psychometric properties.

Methodology: The tool was culturally adapted using standard guidelines, including forward–backward translation, expert review, and pretesting of the pre-final version. The final 42 items Sinhala OHBS were administered among 179 peri and postmenopausal women aged > 40 years selected by a multi-stage cluster sampling method from the Hikkaduwa MOH division. The questionnaire was re-administered to a subset of 60 participants to assess test–retest reliability. Content validity was assessed using the Content Validity Index (CVI); reliability was evaluated through internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) and test–retest reliability (intraclass correlation coefficient, ICC); and construct validity was evaluated using exploratory factor analysis.

Results: The CVI was 0.95, indicating strong expert agreement on item relevance and clarity. The Sinhala OHBS showed an acceptable moderate level of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.68) and moderate test–retest reliability (ICC = 0.68). Principal component analysis revealed a seven-factor structure with eigenvalues >1 that explained 75.1% of the total variance (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin 0.92, Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$)). The factors were interpreted as “Susceptibility,” “Seriousness,” “Benefits of Exercise,” “Benefits of Calcium Intake,” “Barriers to Calcium Intake,” and “Health Motivation”.

Conclusions: The Sinhala version of the OHBS is a valid, culturally appropriate tool for assessing osteoporosis-related health beliefs among Sinhala conversant peri- and postmenopausal women. Although psychometrically acceptable, its moderate reliability warrants cautious use, and further studies are recommended to enhance its reliability and confirm its stability across diverse populations.

Keywords: *health belief scale, osteoporosis, Sinhala version, validation*

OP 04

Barriers in Accessing Reproductive Health Care Services by Teenage Mothers in Galle District: Perspectives of Healthcare Providers

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Introduction: Teenage pregnancy remains a high-priority public health problem in Sri Lanka, wherein 09% of total births are among 15–19-year-old mothers. In the Galle district, teen pregnancy prevalence is 4.3%; hence, there is an urgent need to ensure equitable access to reproductive health care services (RHCS). The perspectives of healthcare providers are crucial for identifying the barriers to the use of RHCS among teenage mothers from urban, rural, and estate settings in the Galle District. This study aims to explore the perceptions of health care providers regarding barriers to access RHCS by teenage mothers in urban, rural, and estate sectors in Galle district, Sri Lanka. The findings presented in this abstract reflect the health-care provider component of a broader qualitative study.

Methodology: An exploratory qualitative community-based study was conducted in three purposively selected Medical Officer of Health (MOH) areas representing urban (Galle), rural (Bope Poddala), and estate (Udugama) sectors among health care providers, including Public Health Midwives, Medical Officers of Health, and Public Health Nursing Sisters. Participants were purposively selected based on involvement in RHCS delivery and provided informed consent. Data were collected via in-depth interviews using an expert-piloted semi-structured interview guide until saturation was achieved, and were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: In-depth interviews with 13 health care providers identified four main themes related to the barriers to access RHCS by teenage mothers. The theme “Uncertainty and misconceptions related to adolescent pregnancy” including sub-themes such as poor knowledge about RHCS and school drop-out, the theme “stigmatization and fear” revealed sub-themes such as fear of disclosure and community judgement, the theme “Economic vulnerability” showed hardships with high transportation costs and financial vulnerability of teenage mothers while the theme “Deficiencies in health care provision” emerged with sub themes including staff shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of adolescent-friendly services.

Conclusions: Health care providers perceived multiple interrelated individual, social, economic, and health system barriers which hindered teenage mothers’ access to RHCS specially in rural and estate sectors.

Keywords: *barriers, reproductive health care services, teenage mothers*

Knowledge, Perceptions, and Preventive Behaviours on Leptospirosis among Patients: A Hospital-Based Study from Monaragala District, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Leptospirosis is a zoonotic infection that poses a significant public health problem in Sri Lanka. Despite its preventability, leptospirosis continues to cause considerable morbidity and mortality due to gaps in knowledge and preventive practices. This study aims to assess knowledge, perceptions, and preventive behaviours regarding leptospirosis among patients in Monaragala, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 194 patients in the medical wards of the General Hospital, Monaragala, using simple random sampling. Data were collected using an adapted, pretested, interviewer-administered questionnaire. Content and face validity were established through an expert panel and the pre-test. The questionnaire assessed socio-demographics, knowledge, perceptions, and preventive behaviours related to leptospirosis. A composite score was calculated for overall knowledge, perception, and preventive practices and categorised as good ($\geq 80\%$), moderate (60%-79%), and poor ($< 60\%$). Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS. Ethical approval was obtained before the study.

Results: Two-thirds of participants were male (66.5%, n=129); 32% (n=62) were over 60 years, and 28.9% (n=56) had education up to A/Ls. Farmers comprised 23.2% (n=45), while 11.3% (n=22) were agricultural workers. More than half (54.6%, n=106) resided in waterlogged areas, (57.7%, n=112) reported the presence of rodents in their households, and (11.3%, n=22) lived in proximity to cattle or pig stalls, while 78.9% (n = 153) lacked proper waste-disposal facilities. Regarding knowledge, 53.6% (n=104) demonstrated good knowledge, while 46.4% (n=90) had moderate knowledge of leptospirosis. Perceptions were generally positive, with 91.2% (n=177) having good perceptions. Preventive behaviours were moderate among 57.2% (n=111) of participants, while 42.8% (n=83) exhibited good preventive practices. Knowledge and preventive behaviours showed significant associations with age, marital status, and education level, while perceptions showed significant associations with gender, education level, and occupation ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: While most participants demonstrated good perceptions of leptospirosis, gaps remained in knowledge and preventive behaviours. Targeted health education and community-based interventions focusing on high-risk groups, proper waste management, and preventive practices are recommended to reduce risk.

Keywords: *knowledge, perceptions, preventive behaviour, leptospirosis*

Cognitive Function Levels and Associated Factors among Institutionalised Elderly Population in Galle District – A Cross-Sectional Study

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Introduction: Ageing is a natural process that all human beings experience. However, cognitive decline among older adults has emerged as a growing concern due to its impact on independence and quality of life. The institutionalised elderly population is a socially neglected and vulnerable group with a higher dependency due to social isolation and multiple comorbidities. The objective of this study is to identify the cognitive function levels and associated factors among the institutionalised older adult population in Galle District.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 185 randomly selected older adults residing in registered residential care homes providing long-term accommodation and basic care services. Cognitive functioning was assessed using the Sinhala-validated Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), which has a total score range of 0-30. Scores of 24-30 indicate normal cognitive function, and a score of 23 or below indicates cognitive impairment. Older adults with hearing or visual impairments, psychiatric illnesses, or critical illnesses were excluded from the study. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: The mean age of the study participants was 71.24 years (SD=5.40), within the 60 to 80 age range. The majority were female (n=134, 72.4%), Sinhalese (n=171, 92.4%), and Buddhist (n=134, 72.4%). Around half of the participants (n=90, 48.6%) were married. The highest proportion (n=95, 51.4%) of participants had an educational level above Grade 6. Most of the participants (n=172, 93%) did not have any current income, and the duration of institutional stay (n=96, 51.9%) was less than five years. The mean MMSE score was 21.54 (SD ± 5.66). Based on the MMSE results, 56.8% (n=100) had cognitive impairment. Cognitive functioning showed statistically significant associations with age, duration of stay, educational level, and current income (p<0.05).

Conclusions: These findings revealed that cognitive impairment was prevalent among institutionalised older adults. It is recommended to enhance cognitive stimulation programs through regular mental activities such as memory games and storytelling sessions, as part of routine institutional care practices.

Keywords: *cognitive function, older adults, institutionalised care*

Grit, Growth Mindset, and Academic Self-efficacy in relation to Academic Performance among Nursing Undergraduates at a Defence University, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Non-cognitive traits such as grit, growth mindset, and academic self-efficacy are increasingly recognised as determinants of persistence and achievement in higher education. Despite their relevance to motivation and self-regulation, empirical evidence within Sri Lankan nursing education remains limited. This study examined interrelationships among these constructs and their associations with academic performance.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among BSc nursing undergraduates at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University using total population sampling. Grit, growth mindset, and academic self-efficacy were measured using validated instruments: the 12-item Grit Scale, 3-item Growth Mindset Scale, and 40-item Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Socio-demographic data were collected using a pre-tested questionnaire, and academic performance was assessed using the last semester Grade Point Average (SGPA). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlation coefficients in SPSS version 26.0, with significance of $p < 0.05$.

Results: Of the 375 eligible nursing undergraduates, 326 participated (response rate: 86.9%); participants were predominantly female across all academic years. Mean (\pm SD) scores were 3.23 ± 0.38 for grit, 3.26 ± 1.03 for growth mindset, and 104.86 ± 16.44 for academic self-efficacy. Grit correlated positively with growth mindset ($r = 0.428$, $p < 0.001$) and SGPA ($r = 0.152$, $p = 0.024$). Growth mindset was not significantly associated with SGPA ($r = 0.063$, $p = 0.353$). Academic self-efficacy correlated negatively with grit ($r = -0.510$, $p < 0.001$), growth mindset ($r = -0.378$, $p < 0.001$), and SGPA ($r = -0.292$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Grit showed a small yet statistically significant positive association with academic performance, whereas growth mindset showed no direct relationship. The inverse associations between academic self-efficacy, SGPA, and the other non-cognitive traits suggest contextual or educational influences. Integrating motivational and self-reflective strategies into nursing curricula may strengthen students’ resilience and academic engagement.

Keywords: *grit; growth mindset; academic self-efficacy; GPA; nursing undergraduates; Sri Lanka*

OP 08

Assessment of Self-Care Practices and Barriers among Nurses at the National Hospital in Galle District: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study

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Introduction: The well-being of nurses is fundamental for delivering safe and high-quality patient care. Professional performances and overall health are promoted by effective self-care practices. However, nurses often face challenges that hinder consistent engagement in self-care. This study aimed to assess current self-care practices and identify perceived barriers among nurses in a selected institution in Galle.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 382 registered nurses at the National Hospital, Galle, using consecutive sampling. Data were collected using a self-developed, pretested, self-administered questionnaire assessing key domains including physical, mental & emotional, social, and occupational self-care alongside perceived barriers. Three experts in the field checked the reliability of the questionnaire separately. Descriptive Statistics summarised self-care practices, barriers, and Quality of Life. An independent samples t-test was used to assess associations between self-care practices and Quality of Life. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25, and $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results: The majority of participants were female (91.6%, $n=350$) and worked in medical and surgical wards. Poor self-care practices were most prominent in physical (84.3%, $n=322$), mental & emotional (55.5%, $n=212$), and social (53.7%, $n=205$) domains, whereas occupational self-care was generally good (76.7%, $n=283$). Key deficient practices were inadequate regular exercise (67.5%, $n=258$), limited daily relaxation (71.7%, $n=274$), infrequent social interactions (74.1%, $n=283$), and inconsistent use of protective gowns (61.3%, $n=234$). Long working hours and shifts, workplace stress, and inadequate staffing and resources were identified as major barriers. Significant positive associations were found between Quality of Life and physical ($p=0.006$) and occupational self-care practices ($p=0.00$), while mental & emotional ($p=0.062$) and social ($p=0.939$) were not statistically significant.

Conclusions: Despite their crucial role in healthcare, many nurses struggle to maintain adequate self-care due to occupational and institutional constraints. Interventions aimed at reducing workload pressures, improving staffing, and resource allocation may help support better self-care among nurses. Future research should explore the effectiveness of wellness programs, stress-management initiatives, and supportive institutional policies.

Keywords: *self-care, nurses, barriers*

Administrative and Financial Factors Associated with Nurse Retention at Government Hospitals in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Despite the critical role of nurses in sustaining quality healthcare delivery, limited evidence exists on how administrative and financial factors influence nurse retention in government hospitals of the Jaffna District. This study aimed to assess the influence of administrative and financial factors on the retention of nurses working in government hospitals in the Jaffna District.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 282 nurses from one tertiary and three secondary hospitals in the Jaffna District using proportionate random sampling. Data were collected through a structured and pre-tested self-administered questionnaire that employed a three-point Likert scale (1 = this makes me leave, 2 = neutral, 3 = this makes me retain). Data were analysed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and chi-square tests to examine associations between retention intention and influencing factors. Ethical approval was obtained.

Results: Most participants were female (68.8%, n=194), aged 26-40 years (86.6%, n=244), with 1-5 years of service (68.8%, n=194). Among salary and benefit factors, nurses intending to stay reported higher mean scores for overtime allowance (2.59±0.56), annual salary increment (2.57±0.59), and healthcare benefits (2.58±0.54) compared to those intending to leave (M=2.44, 2.19, and 2.24, respectively). All differences were statistically significant (p<0.05), with the largest gap observed in perceived salary sufficiency (p<0.001). Administrative factors were also strongly associated with retention. Nurses with higher retention intention reported effective communication with administrators (p<0.001), supportive supervision (p < 0.001), and fair nurse managers (p = 0.006). Counselling availability (p<0.001) and proactive recruitment (p = 0.007) further predicted retention, while negative feedback and poor managerial relationships increased the likelihood of leaving (p<0.05).

Conclusion: Findings underscore the need for strategic human resource policies emphasising fair remuneration and supportive management to enhance workforce stability, including structured incentives, leadership training, and improved communication.

Keywords: *administrative management, government hospitals, retention intention*

OP 10

Awareness, Level of Experience, and Impact of Workplace Incivility among Nurses in Mawanella Hospital, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Workplace incivility, characterised by disrespectful and rude behaviour, is a global issue affecting many professions, including nursing, and can undermine teamwork, productivity, and quality of patient care. This study assessed nurses’ awareness, level of experience, and the professional and personal impacts of workplace incivility at Mawanella Hospital, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A quantitative, descriptive study was conducted among 141 nurses selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire after verifying for face validity and analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS v27. Experiences and impacts of workplace incivility were assessed for three career stages: novice, newly transferred, and after settling, using scales adapted from previous research. Experience scores were categorised as low (6–13), medium (14–21), or high (22–30). Impact scores were classified as low, medium, or high using cut-offs of 0–6, 7–12, and 13–18 for professional life and 0–5, 6–10, and 11–15 for personal life.

Results: Most participants were female (97.2%), diploma-qualified (87.2%), and aged 41-50 years (50.4%). Over half (56.0%) were unaware of workplace incivility, although 55.3% recognised it as a human-rights violation, and 60.3% knew that actions could be taken. More than half (52.5%) reported experiencing incivility. Higher mean experience scores were reported during the ‘novice’ ($\bar{x}=15.87$, $SD=4.33$) and ‘newly transferred’ ($\bar{x}=15.14$, $SD=4.35$) stages, with medium-to-high levels of experience among 67.3% and 56.8%, respectively. Most participants reported impacts on professional (93.6%) and personal (88.7%) life, with higher professional impacts ($\bar{x}= 5.60$, 5.94, and 4.86) than personal impacts ($\bar{x}= 2.78$, 3.02, and 2.49) across three stages.

Conclusions: Despite limited awareness, workplace incivility was commonly experienced by nurses, particularly during early-career and transition stages, with impacts on their professional and personal lives. Awareness-raising workshops and the formulation and implementation of policies to prevent and address incivility are recommended.

Keywords: *awareness, level of experience, impact, nurses, workplace incivility*

ABSTRACTS OF POSTER PRESENTATIONS

PP 01

Living Alone as an Older Adult: Perceptions of Adults in a Rapidly Ageing Sri Lankan Community

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Introduction: Sri Lanka is experiencing rapid population ageing, with Galle District reporting one of the highest proportions of older adults. Understanding adults’ perceptions of older people living alone is important for developing appropriate community-based care and support strategies. This study assessed perceptions and associated factors among adults in the Galle District regarding older adults living alone.

Methods: An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted among 422 adults aged 20–59 years residing in Galle District, selected using multistage sampling. Data were collected using a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire developed through literature review and expert consultation. The instrument consisted of 25 culturally appropriate statements assessing perceptions about older adults living alone, along with one open-ended question on general perception. Content validity was established through expert review, and internal consistency was confirmed using Cronbach’s alpha. Perception scores were categorised as poor (0–40), moderate (41–75), or positive (76–100). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and one-way ANOVA in SPSS version 25.0.

Results: Among participants, 139 (32.9%) were aged 36–45 years. Overall, 287 (68.0%) demonstrated moderate perception, while 135 (32.0%) showed positive perception; none reported poor perception. Higher perception scores were significantly associated with high income satisfaction ($p = 0.02$), urban residence ($p = 0.02$), having disabled children ($p = 0.02$), extended family living arrangements ($p = 0.02$), frequent visits to parents ($p < 0.001$), and valuing family living after 60 years ($p < 0.001$). Many participants identified financial constraints and lack of time as caregiving barriers, though most expressed willingness to support older adults and viewed elder care as a shared responsibility.

Conclusion: Adults in Galle District generally held moderate to positive perceptions of older adults living alone. These perceptions were influenced by socioeconomic and family-related factors. Despite perceived barriers, a strong willingness to support older adults was evident, highlighting the importance of strengthening community-based and family-centred elder care initiatives.

Keywords: *living alone, community-dwelling, older adults, perception, adults*

Knowledge and Attitudes on Sepsis Identification and their Associated Factors among Nurses Working in Selected Wards at Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Sepsis affects about 19.4 million people annually and causes 5.3 million deaths worldwide. Nurses play a key role in early detection through screening and education. Hence, this study assessed knowledge and attitudes on sepsis identification and their associated factors among nurses working in selected wards at Colombo South Teaching Hospital (CSTH), Sri Lanka

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional design was used to study a sample of 273 nurses working in the medical, surgical, and orthopaedic wards at CSTH. Stratified random sampling was performed. Data were collected during the period from February to March 2025, using a pre-tested and validated self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire assessed socio-demographics, sepsis knowledge (10 items; scores: high 8–11, moderate 5–7, low 0–4), and attitudes (12 items; positive 45–60, neutral 29–44, negative 12–28) using a 5 Point Likert Scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including the Chi-square test and Spearman’s rho correlation, using SPSS version 23.

Results: The response rate was 77.65%. Most participants were female (83.1%), aged 26–35 years (85.4%), and had a nursing diploma (65.7%). The majority of participants demonstrated good knowledge of sepsis identification, with a mean score of 8.46 ± 1.65 across all wards (Surgical = 8.68 ± 1.73 , Medical = 8.42 ± 1.45 , Orthopaedic = 7.81 ± 1.91). The overall attitudes toward sepsis identification were positive, with a mean score of 51.09 ± 4.83 across all wards (Surgical = 50.01 ± 4.84 , Medical = 52.16 ± 0.65 , and Orthopaedic = 51.09 ± 4.83). The “Years of experience” was significantly associated with knowledge ($p < 0.001$), and both “years of experience” and “working unit” were significantly associated with attitudes ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: This study found that nurses possess good knowledge and positive attitudes toward sepsis identification. Their attitudes were significantly associated with “years of experience” and “working unit”. Focused ward-specific clinical sessions are recommended to address identified gaps in sepsis recognition

Keywords: *sepsis identification, nurses’ knowledge and attitudes, clinical experience*

PP 03

Knowledge, Health-seeking Behaviour, and Associated Factors regarding Dengue Fever among Adults in a Selected MOH area in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Dengue fever is the most common mosquito-borne disease worldwide and remains a major public health concern in Sri Lanka due to a recent rise in cases. Understanding community knowledge and health-seeking behaviour is essential for effective prevention and control. This study aimed to explore knowledge, health-seeking behaviour, and associated factors regarding dengue fever among adults in a selected MOH area in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in March 2025 among 310 adults from five randomly selected Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions in the Negombo MOH area. Participants were selected proportionately from each GN division, with one adult aged 18–65 years recruited per household using convenience sampling. Eligible participants had lived in the area for more than six months. Data were collected using a self-developed, validated, and pretested interviewer-administered questionnaire. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. The collected data were analysed employing descriptive statistics. Associations were assessed using Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests, with significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Results: Among the respondents, 62.6% were female, 96.8% were Sinhalese, and 47.1% had been educated up to the Ordinary Level. Over half (51%) reported previous experience with dengue. Most participants (76.1%) demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge and adequate health-seeking behaviour (86.5%). The majority (91%) preferred hospitals over self-treatment. Only 49% correctly identified the dengue virus as the causative agent, and 46% identified the correct mosquito biting times. Recognition of dengue hemorrhagic fever symptoms was limited, and 68% believed specific treatment was available. Monthly income showed a significant association with health-seeking behaviour ($p = 0.000$).

Conclusion: Most participants had satisfactory knowledge and adequate health-seeking behaviour. Targeted health education programmes and strengthened public healthcare services are recommended to further improve knowledge and health-seeking practices related to dengue.

Keywords: *dengue, knowledge, health-seeking behaviour*

PP 04

Nurses' Attitudes towards the Importance of Family Involvement in Nursing Care and its Associated Factors in Selected State Hospitals in Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Family involvement in patient care is a crucial component of holistic and patient-centred nursing practice. This study aimed to assess nurses' attitudes toward the importance of family involvement in nursing care and its associated factors in selected state hospitals in Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 385 nursing officers in selected state hospitals, including Tertiary (n = 351), Secondary (n = 7), and Primary care hospitals (n = 27), through convenience sampling. A pre-tested online survey was conducted using the validated Families' Importance in Nursing Care – Nurses' Attitudes (FINC-NA) tool. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests in SPSS version 25. The total FINC-NA score was categorised as high (80–100%), moderate (60–79%), and low (<60%).

Results: The mean age of participants was 35.81 years (SD = 7.2), with a mean working experience of 9.95 years (SD = 6.8). The majority were female (72.7%, n = 280). Most were Grade III Nursing Officers (53.0%, n = 204), and over half worked in teaching hospitals (57.7%, n = 222). The mean scores were highest for family as a resource in nursing care (Fam-RNC, M = 46.13, SD = 4.26) and family as a conversational partner (Fam-CP, M = 35.79, SD = 4.25), while lower for family as a burden (Fam-B, M = 16.89, SD = 3.15). For family as own resource (Fam-OR), the mean was 17.55 (SD = 2.96). Overall, 89.4% (n = 344) of nurses demonstrated very positive attitudes, while 10.4% (n = 40) had moderate attitudes, and only 0.3% (n = 1) had neutral to negative attitudes. Chi-square analysis indicated significant associations between attitudes and age (p < 0.001), marital status (p = 0.010), designation (p = 0.030), working experience (p < 0.001), educational qualifications (p = 0.010), and type of hospital (p = 0.040).

Conclusions: The study found that nurses generally hold very positive attitudes toward family involvement in care, viewing families as key partners in the nursing process. This is underscoring the need for professional development, family-centred practices, and supportive policies to enhance nurse–family collaboration and patient outcomes.

Keywords: *attitudes, family-centred care, nurses*

Severity of Eczema and its Association with Quality of Life among Patients Attending a Selected Hospital in Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Eczema is a chronic inflammatory skin disease with increasing prevalence worldwide, including Sri Lanka. The study aims to assess the severity of eczema and its association with the quality of life (QoL) of patients attending the skin clinic at District General Hospital, Gampaha.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 300 eczema patients (≥ 18 years) recruited through convenience sampling. Eczema severity was measured using validated, interviewer-administered, pre-tested Patient-Oriented Eczema Measure (POEM), where higher scores indicate greater disease severity (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.883$). Data were analysed using SPSS v25. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square, and Pearson correlation were conducted, and p-values <0.05 were considered significant. ERC approval and institutional permission were obtained before the study.

Results: The mean age of participants was 42.8 ± 13.6 years, with the majority aged 30–59 years. Most were married (85.0%, $n=255$) and unemployed (63.7%, $n=191$). Itching was reported on 05–06 days per week by 116 patients (38.7%), while 143 (47.7%) experienced sleep disturbances 03–04 days weekly. Common comorbidities included diabetes (26.0%, $n=78$), emotional problems (15.7%, $n=47$), heart disease (08.3%, $n=25$), and hypertension (8.0%, $n=24$). Most participants experienced moderate (38.3%) or severe eczema (52.0%), while only a small proportion had mild (04.3%) or very severe disease (05.3%). Regarding perceived general health, nearly half of the participants (48.3%, $n=145$) rated their health as "Good," while a cumulative 29.0% reported "Excellent" or "Very Good" health; conversely, 22.3% perceived their health as either "Fair" (19.0%) or "Poor" (3.3%). A significant association was found between age and eczema severity ($\chi^2=32.87$, $p=0.005$). A weak positive correlation was observed between POEM scores and general health rating ($r = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: Most participants had moderate to severe eczema with itching, sleep disturbances, and comorbidities, with severity significantly associated with poorer quality of life. These findings emphasise the need for continuous strategies that address dermatological symptoms, psychological support, lifestyle modification, and patient education to improve quality of life among individuals living with eczema.

Keywords: atopic eczema, atopic dermatitis, hand eczema, quality of life

Burden among Family Caregivers of Children Diagnosed with Cancer in a Selected Hospital, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Cancer diagnosis in children is a traumatic experience, and families often experience physical, emotional, and financial difficulties, which are collectively referred to as caregiver burden. In Sri Lanka, where family plays a central role in healthcare, understanding the extent of caregiver burden is essential to ensure holistic support for both the child and the caregiver. Thus, this study aims to assess the level of caregiver burden among family caregivers of children diagnosed with cancer at Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 228 family caregivers of children aged below 18 years diagnosed with cancer, selected using a simple random sampling method in the pediatric cancer clinic. All types of childhood cancer diagnoses were included. Data were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Caregiver burden was assessed using the validated 12-item Zarit Burden Interview scale, with scores categorised as no to mild burden (0-10), mild to moderate burden (11-20), and high burden (>20). Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics in SPSS version 25.

Results: The mean age of family caregivers was 36.79 ± 7.205 years. The majority were mothers (85.5%, n=195), Buddhists (66.2%, n=151), and married (93.9%, n=214). Most participants were unemployed (75.9%, n=173) and had an education level up to O/L's (61.8%, n=141). Regarding the caregiver burden, 71.9% (n = 164) experienced mild to moderate burden, 18.0% (n = 41) reported a high level of burden, and only 10.1% (n = 23) expressed no to mild burden. A statistically significant association was found between caregiver burden and education level ($p = 0.024$), whereas other sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, religion, marital status, and family income showed no significant association ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusions: The majority of family caregivers experience a mild to moderate level of burden, with a smaller proportion reporting high burden. Burden was significantly associated with education level. These findings emphasise the need for targeted educational and psychosocial support programs to alleviate the burden among family caregivers.

Keywords: *cancer, caregiver, children, burden, family*

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Social Media Usage among School Adolescents in Selected Schools in Warakapola Medical Officer of Health Area, Sri Lanka: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Introduction: Social media use among adolescents has increased rapidly, influencing many aspects of their lives. However, limited local research has examined social media usage patterns among school-going adolescents. This study aimed to describe the patterns of social media use among adolescents attending three government schools in the Warakapola Medical Officer of Health area, Sri Lanka.

Methodology: This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among randomly selected 200 adolescents aged between 14 and 16 years. Data were collected using a self-designed, content-validated, self-administered questionnaire comprised of questions gathering demographic information, social media usage, reasons for use, and activities performed using social media. Data were analysed descriptively using SPSS version 25. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Provincial Director of Health Office, Ratnapura.

Results: Of the participants, 58.5% were female (n=117), and most were studying in Grade 10 (81%, n=162), while 19% were in Grade 11 (n=38). The majority were 15 years old (59%, n=118). WhatsApp (94.7%, n=189) and YouTube (84.5%, n=169) were the most commonly used social media platforms, whereas Facebook was used by nearly 30% (n=60) of the adolescents. Social media was mainly used for educational purposes (93%, n=186) and for communication with friends (88.2%, n=176) and teachers (54%, n=108). More than half of the participants (55.5%, n=111) used social media 6–7 days per week, and 70% (n=140) spent between 30 minutes and three hours per day. Most adolescents use social media to send instant messages and ask questions. Although nearly 60% (n ≈ 120) were aware of security and privacy measures, 34% reported having no idea. A large proportion perceived social media as helpful in obtaining good grades at school (85.5%, n = 171).

Conclusion: Most adolescents perceive social media as beneficial for their education. Schools and parents should promote responsible use and improve adolescents’ awareness of online safety to enhance benefits and reduce potential risks.

Keywords: *school adolescents, social media use, Sri Lanka*

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