EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE LEVELS ON MANAGEMENT OF SNAKE ENVENOMATION AMONG MALAYSIAN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFTER A RELATED SHORT TRAINING COURSE

MA Adilah, A Rahmat, RMK Halilol National Poison Centre of Malaysia, Malaysia

Introduction: Over the past 5 years, the National Poison Centre (NPC) of Malaysia has handled enquiries on snake bites which is about 49% of the total of all natural toxin poisoning cases referred to the centre. Despite the high rate of cases of snake bites, there are not many health professionals who are adequately trained to manage snake envenomation. In view of this, a training course was conducted by the NPC to familiarise health professionals with the management of snake envenomation.

Objective: The objective of the paper is to present the outcome of the training with respect to the level of knowledge before and after the two-day training course on management of snake envenomation in Malaysia.

Method: In December 2011, the NPC organised a two-day course to familiarise health professionals with basic knowledge in managing snake envenomation. Five medical doctors and eleven pharmacists aged 25 to 30 years-old participated in the workshop. Lecture-based and case-studies approach were applied at the workshop. Pre-workshop knowledge test was given to ascertain their baseline knowledge and the same test was given at the end of the workshop. Using relevant World Health Organization (WHO) clinical guidelines, the test questions was set to cover basic and important identification and clinical knowledge in managing snake bites. The comparison between their knowledge before and after training were analysed by using Chi-square in SPSS 18.0.

Results: The evaluation showed that most of the participants understood basic properties of snake venom and were able to identify unique features of venomous snakes. Knowledge on the toxicity of specific snake family was significantly increased from 43.8% to 93.8% of the participants ($p=0.006$). Most of the participants have basic knowledge on the use of antivenom both before and after workshop. Significant increased in knowledge on antivenom from less than 50% to 93.8% ($p<0.01$) of participants was found in three questions on antivenom, which covered treatment time for systemic envenomation, method of administration and dosing for child and adult. Evaluation of eleven pre-test questions on antivenom showed the lack of knowledge on the indication of antivenom in local and systemic envenomation, use of expired antivenom and the availability of certain antivenom in Malaysia. However, most of the participants were able to answer correctly during post-test. ***Conclusion:*** The health professionals who participated in the course were found to be lacking in knowledge on several aspects of snake bite management before the training but post-test revealed improvement in the scores. Improving the current academic curriculum on snake envenomation and following with advanced level training is a good mean to enhance the knowledge and skills among the health professionals towards promoting optimum patient care.