

Perceptions, behaviours and challenges in health-seeking among blind graduates and undergraduates registered at a specific Disabled Persons Organization (DPO) in Sri Lanka

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Visual impairment is a growing public health concern. Understanding the visually-impaired population's current perceptions and behaviours in health-seeking and the challenges they face is crucial for ensuring equitable care. Hence, this study was carried out to describe the perceptions, behaviours and challenges faced in health-seeking among blind graduates and undergraduates registered at a specific Disabled Persons Organization (DPO) in Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 123 graduates and undergraduates aged 20 to 70 from a selected DPO using simple random sampling. Data were collected via a pre-tested structured questionnaire. SPSS version 20.0 was used for analysis. Response rate was 82%. Majority of the participants (56.1%) had a neutral perception regarding health-seeking. Most (59.3%) did not feel confident to find and access healthcare services independently, while 33.4% had faced discrimination when being treated in hospitals. Of those with chronic diseases, 56.7% sought follow-up care in the government sector. For acute diseases, majority (61.8%) preferred private sector. Majority (63.4%) had good compliance, while 17.8% had poor compliance. Most of them (n = 88, 71.5%) used YouTube to acquire information. Most of them (48.8%) found obtaining healthcare moderately challenging. Majority (70.7%) found it difficult to use public transportation while 53.7% found it difficult to resolve questions they had on health-related topics. Most participants had a neutral perception of healthcare, emphasizing the need to promote positive engagement with healthcare services. Most preferred the private-sector for acute conditions while preferring the government sector for chronic disease follow-up. A majority relied heavily on online sources for health-related information. Furthermore, most participants also found healthcare access moderately challenging, facing difficulties with transportation, and in resolving health-related questions. Hence these facilities should be further optimised to provide better quality care for the blind community and to assist them in overcoming these challenges.

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