

Knowledge and the prevalence of risk factors of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) among the students at the university of Sri Jayewardenepura

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PCOS, although a common endocrine disorder among females of reproductive age with significant health implications, is poorly understood and often underdiagnosed. Adequate knowledge and access to reliable sources of information are crucial for early diagnosis and reducing long-term complications. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 148 female undergraduates at the Faculty of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura using a self-administered, pretested, and validated questionnaire. Knowledge was categorized into adequate and inadequate using pre-established cutoff values, and the presence of risk factors was also evaluated. The cohort was selected to prevent potential over-estimation of knowledge, and the age at which early manifestations of PCOS typically occur, offering a window of opportunity to intervene. The mean knowledge about PCOS among undergraduates was 7.1216 (SD=5.789) out of 20. The majority (n=108, 72.97%) had a poor knowledge regarding PCOS. Correspondingly, the majority failed to recognize symptoms: hirsutism (56.76%), acne (66.22%), and complications: diabetes (76.35%), infertility (54.73%), or heart disease (83.11%). The majority had acquired knowledge through social media (45.95%, n=68), followed by family members (18.92%, n=28), and only a few via health professionals (11.41%, n=17). The most prevalent risk factors identified were fast food consumption (80.41%), inadequate physical activity (49.32%), obesity (26.35%), family history of DM (39.86%), family history of infertility (39.86%), and irregular menstrual cycles of a 1st degree relative (25.00%). The study findings concluded that despite the high prevalence of risk factors for PCOS, the majority of female undergraduates had inadequate knowledge of the condition compared to age-matched cohorts globally. The predominant source of information was social media, highlighting the critical need for evidence-based, reliable awareness campaigns conducted via online platforms to effectively reach the vulnerable population.

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