

Parental Stress, Economic Burden and Associated Factors among Parents of Thalassemia Patients in Kurunagala District, Sri Lanka

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Thalassemia is a significant health issue in Sri Lanka where research has focused on the epidemiology. In contrast, less accessible literature is found in on parental stress of Thalassemia patients and their relatives. This study is designed to assess parental stress, economic burden and associated factors among parents of thalassemia patients admitted to Thalassemia wards of Kurunegala Teaching hospital (KTH). A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using an interviewer administered questionnaire. The sample size was 145. The data was analysed using “IBM SPSS Statistics” software. The ethical clearance was obtained from National institute of health Sciences (NIHS/ERC/18/72R). Majority of the study participants were females (86.9%) and 57.2% were from Kurunegala district. Among the respondents, 65.5% were less than 40 years of age. The Berry and Browns standard stress scale (rating was reverse scored) was used to detect the stress level of the parents where the mean stress score was 56.7. Among the population, 55.2% was stressed. Parents aged ≤ 40 years ($t=3.6, p<0.001$), education level up to secondary education or below ($t=5.3, p<0.001$), spouse’s education level up to secondary education or below ($t=4.0, p<0.001$), more than one blood transfusions per month ($t=2.06, p<0.001$), monthly income less than 25,000 LKR ($t=3.4, p<0.001$), expenses more than 2,000 LKR for hospitalization ($t=3.6, p<0.001$) and more than one thalassemic child ($t=4.8, p<0.001$) had significant associations with high stress level of parents. The study shows that there is a special need of interventions to tackle the stress levels of the parents of the thalassemic patients.

Keywords: *parental stress, thalassemia, Kurunegala district, economic burden.*