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“Child Health: Navigating through crises”

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Council of the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians	6
Organizing Committee of the Scientific Congress	8
Message from the Chief Guest	13
Message from the Special Guests	15
Message from the President of SLCP	19
Message from the Secretary of SLCP	23
Academic and Service Activities 2022/23	25
Past Presidents of the Sri Lanka Paediatric Association / Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians	54
Past Secretaries of the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians	57
Professor C. C. de Silva Memorial Oration: Past Orators	58
Dr Stella de Silva Memorial Oration: Past Orators	63
Dr B.J.C. Perera Research Prize Oration: Past Orators	65
Recipients of Fellowship of the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians	66
List of Guest Speakers	72
Pre-Congress/ Post-Congress Workshops	78
Inauguration Programme	83
Academic Programme	87
Abstracts of Free Paper Oral Presentations	105
Abstracts of Free Paper Poster Presentations	139
Abstracts of Breakfast Meetings, Plenary Lectures and Symposia	353
Acknowledgements	392

INVESTIGATING THE MULTIFACETED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL PERCEPTION OF FEEDING DIFFICULTIES, NUTRITIONAL STATUS, AND ATTRIBUTES OF CEREBRAL PALSY: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY AT A TEACHING HOSPITAL

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INTRODUCTION

The perception of feeding difficulties by the parent plays a significant role in the nutritional status of children with cerebral palsy (CP). Understanding the multifaceted relationship between parental perceptions, nutritional status and attributes of CP is crucial for developing effective therapeutic feeding programmes and treatment protocols.

OBJECTIVES

To explore the multifaceted relationships that influence parental perception of feeding difficulties in children with CP.

METHOD

An analytical cross-sectional study at Teaching Hospital, Kurunegala utilized an interviewer-administered questionnaire to assess parental perceptions of feeding difficulties in CP. The children were examined for disease attributes. Ethical clearance was from the Ethics Review Committee of the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians.

RESULTS

The study sample consisted of 226 parents and their children with CP, among whom 47.4% exhibited moderate to severe acute malnutrition. Majority did not believe mealtimes were stressful for the child or themselves. Parents of Gross Motor Function Classification Scale (GMFCS) level 5 (n=65) and quadriplegic CP (n=83) however agreed to this. The majority (43) children were undernourished in the group who found mealtimes were stressful. Even though 83.4% disagreed that oral feeding was difficult, most (n=88) of their children were undernourished; 74.8% believed that their children were getting adequate calories. However, majority (n=74) of these children were undernourished. Most parents (n=23) also disagreed that their children were undernourished; 53.6% felt that feeding takes a long time.

A significant association was found between limb involvement and caregiver perceptions ($p < 0.05$). Analysis of variance demonstrated significance in both GMFCS and nutritional status on parental perceptions ($p < 0.05$). No significant association was observed between tone and caregiver perception.

CONCLUSIONS

Even though caregivers did not perceive problems with feeding, their children demonstrated features of undernourishment. Time for consuming feeds, stress when feeding to both parent and child were associated with undernourishment.