

## **ABSTRACT**

Patients with established coronary heart disease (CHD) are the top priority for prevention because they are at high risk of recurrent disease. Recommendations of prevention of CHD in clinical practice are given for the patients in the UK. However, such recommendations are not found in Sri Lanka. Therefore this survey study was conducted at the Sri Jayawardenapura General Hospital in Colombo to evaluate whether the patients with identified myocardial infarction (MI) obtain appropriate dietary advices and guidelines as secondary prevention. Fifty hospitalized patients (both males and females) with established MI participated in the study. All subjects aged < 65 years, and were free from family history of premature CHD, diabetes or other chronic disease and serious complications.

A questionnaire was given to get information about dietary advices / guidelines and lifestyle advice that the patients obtained from various sources. In addition their recent dietary practices were assessed using a food frequency questionnaire.

A survey results showed that all subjects knew that excess body weight has adverse effect on heart disease. From the overweight subjects (46%) only 10% engaged in exercises. Out of the obese subjects (10%) no one practiced exercises. Fifty eight percent of subjects correctly identified cholesterol containing foods and 72% of subjects accurately identified fat containing foods. Twenty eight percent of subjects ate less than 3 eggs per week, 60% of subjects ate more 3 eggs per week and only 12% of subjects did not eat eggs at all. Two to three eggs per week is recommended to the heart patients. All subjects knew that fish consumption is good for health of the heart. Eighty two percent of subjects ate fish adequately and the amount was approximately greater than 220g per week. More than half of the subjects (58%) ate oily fish (Salmon, mackerel, sardines, etc.). Only 22% of subjects took fish oil supplements. In European countries, fish oil supplements are recommended as a treatment for heart patients. All subjects knew that fruits and vegetables consumption is good for health of the heart. However only 14% of subjects ate fruits daily. Majority of the subjects (86%) ate less than three fruits per week.

All smokers (16%) and alcohol drinkers (20%) got advice about adverse effect of smoking habits and heavy alcohol consumption on heart disease. More than half of the subjects got advices on secondary prevention from doctors, nurses, peers and mass media. But less than 4% of subjects got advices from dietitians/ nutritionists. The reason for not categorizing dietitians/ nutritionists as sources of advice may be because the subjects did not have consulted dietitians/ nutritionists or they cannot distinguish dietitians/ nutritionists from other health workers working in the hospital.

Majority of the subjects got insufficient advices on dietary and lifestyle habits, but considerable number of subjects did not practice those advices. Most of the subjects were not aware of dietary management to reduce the risk of CHD.