

## Abstract

To investigate the susceptibility of Sri Lankan new entry university students to varicella zoster virus (VZV) infection, a cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out among new entrant medical and engineering students of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Self-reported history of chicken pox was studied first, followed by serological evaluation for VZV IgG antibodies. A total of 451 students participated in the study out of which 189 (41.9%) reported a history of chicken pox. Median age of reported age of acquiring the disease was 14 years with an interquartile range of 10 to 17 years. Only 25% of the population reported history of infection prior to age of 10 years. The seropositive rate of VZV IgG antibodies among undergraduates with a negative history of chicken pox was 10.1% ( 25/247). The present study indicates that nearly half (222/436) of the study population (50.9%, 95% CI 46.2-55.6) was susceptible to VZV infection.

## Keywords

history of chicken pox, new entry university students, Sri Lanka, varicella zoster infection, VZV antibodies Infectious

diseases continue to pose a major threat to the health of developing countries in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Despite the declining mortality during past few decades, comparative studies show that the burden of infectious disease is markedly higher than in developed countries.<sup>2</sup> Some of these diseases are not considered as major public health problems, thus neglected by policy makers and health care providers.