

Abstract

The National Twin Registry of Sri Lanka was established in 1997 as a volunteer register. To extend it to a population-based register, we examined the effectiveness of tracing older twins by inspecting birth records and recruiting them by postal invitation and in-person contact. Birth records at a divisional secretariat reported from 2 maternity hospitals between the years of 1954–1970 were scrutinised to identify a random sample of twins. These hospitals had the highest twin delivery rates for the whole country. We identified 620 twins and a questionnaire was mailed to them. Research assistants visited a cohort of non-respondents (71) in the postal survey. These 620 twins were identified after perusing 20,700 birth records. The twinning rate was estimated at 29.95 ($[620/20700] \times 1000$) twins per 1000 registered births (CI 27.63–32.27). In the postal survey, 37 (12%) responded and 62 letters were returned (20%). Both twins were still alive in 20 pairs, one was still alive in 15 pairs, and both twins were dead in 2 pairs. During field visits, 42 (59.2%) addresses were located. Information was available on 16 twin pairs. Both twins were alive in 8 pairs, one each in 4 pairs, and both were dead in 4 pairs and at least one twin was traced in 10 pairs (14%). Both the postal and the field survey gave a low yield. This finding is different from tracing younger twins born between 1985–1997 by using the same methods. Migration, urbanization and development in the country might have affected tracing older twins from the birth record addresses, which were decades old.