

## Epidemiology of deliberate self-harm in Galle district

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### Abstract

Deliberate Self-Harm is an important health problem and is one of the strongest associated factors for completed suicides. It is estimated that nearly 30000 incidents of DSH each year in Sri Lanka, adding an immense burden to the health care system of the country. Attempts to understand and prevent the occurrence of suicidal acts require the assessment of epidemiology of the problem in a given setting. DSH is associated with variety of environmental factors. Objective of this study was to describe the epidemiology of DSH in District of Galle in Southern Sri Lanka. A descriptive study was conducted, involving all 3 tertiary care hospitals in District of Galle over a period of 8 months in year of 2015. All consecutive admissions of DSH during the study period were recruited. An episode of intentional self-harm that did not lead to death was considered as DSH. A pre-tested structured interviewer administered questionnaire was used to obtain socio-demographic data and other relevant variables from patients while a data sheet was used to extract information from medical records. Exclusion of primary and secondary level hospitals was a limitation. Total study population consisted of 392 episodes of DSH. Mean age of study population was 27 years (SD 12.59). There were more females (61.2 %), and currently not married (55.4%), while majority were educated up to secondary level (87.5%). Female dominance below 25 age group was evident ( $p = 0.004$ ). Commonest precipitating factor was conflict with spouse (28.1%), while 51.5% of those who used a single method reported medicine self-poisoning. Highest rate of admissions was noted during Sundays (2.27 per day) and, when disaggregated with time, the highest rate was noted between 4pm to 8pm of the day (0.14 per hour). Female predominance was noted among those who used drug overdose ( $p = < 0.001$ ), but there were more males among those used domestic chemicals such as detergents ( $p = 0.002$ ). Majority of DSH cases were young, unmarried females. Drug overdose was the commonest method while was reported as the most prevalent precipitating factor. In depth exploration of environmental factors that associated with DSH, particularly responsible for observed variations are important.

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