

ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka due to food borne illnesses many persons get illnesses but proper numbers are not reported. There are three main causes of food borne illnesses such as chemical added to food intentionally or as an incidental result of use in production, processing and distribution, poisonous plants, animals or due to micro organisms such as bacteria, molds, virus and parasites. To prevent food borne illnesses food safety practises are important. Hygienic food handling practises from food production to consumption especially in retail food handling is a crucial part in food safety.

There are many rules and regulations under Food Act in Sri Lanka to maintain hygienic conditions in retail outlets and these are mainly assessed by Medical Officer of Health (MOH) offices in the area. But maintaining the hygienic food handling practises and cleanliness of the retail outlets in the area are questionable. A research was conducted to assess the awareness and attitudes of food handlers about hygienic food handling practices and cleanliness of retail outlets in Piliyandala area. Firstly by analysing the secondary data which has been collected by MOH office some critical points were revealed. According to their grading system which is most concern about the cleanliness of retail outlets not about hygienic food handling practices, (91 %) of retail outlets were in good hygienic conditions("A" graded) but only (7.1 %) of food handlers have got proper training over food manufacturing and food handling practices. By discussions with the Public Health Inspectors (PHIs') in the areas was able to find that they also has identified that there are some problems in attitudes and awareness of hygienic food handling practises in retail outlets well as cleanliness.

Primary data was collected through a survey to get an idea about hygienic food handling practises and cleanliness of the retail outlets in Piliyandala area. Data was collected from 150 food retail outlets well as from food handlers working in them. Data was collected through a questionnaire and by using observation data. Gathered data was statistically analysed and found out that (15.4%) of retail outlets cleanliness was not up to the satisfactory level. Awareness of hygienic food handling practices were low in certain areas such as maintaining personal hygiene, prevention of cross contamination, maintaining outlet cleanliness and maintaining proper storage conditions. Collected data was statistically analyzed to find out which factors effect on hygienic

food handling practices as well as maintaining the cleanliness of the retail outlets. Effect of education level on hand washing practises well as effect of educational level on personal cleanliness was revealed. But there were no effect of education level on cleanliness of the retail outlet.

By gathering consumer ideas of safe food handling it was able to find out that some people concern only about quality of the food not the hygienic situation of the place where they buy the food or the person who sell the food. But nowadays lot of people are concern on the hygienic condition of the food, place they buy the food well as person where they buy the food.

Based on above findings a food safety awareness building program was designed to build awareness among retail food handlers about hygienic food handling practice and maintaining cleanliness of retail outlets. As important events under food safety awareness building program check lists were designed suitable for different kinds of retail outlets (bakery shops, meat shops, fish stalls, boutiques, super markets, street vendors etc.), posters and leaflets were designed and seminars were planned.