

Awareness and Attitudes of Older Adults in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka towards the Practice of Donning Facemasks during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The increase in the number of patients with COVID-19 has led to the public donning facemasks. The aged population is more prone to suffer from severe complications due to COVID-19. As a country with a rapidly ageing population, this study was carried out among older adults in Gampaha District to assess the awareness, attitude, and practice of donning facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic. A descriptive, cross-sectional research design was used. Data collection was done using a self-administered questionnaire among a conveniently selected 100 older adults residing in Gampaha District. The collected data was descriptively analysed using the SPSS software. The participants have completed secondary education level as their highest educational qualification (34%). The results indicate that most were aware of the occurring pandemic (92%) and that wearing a mask covering the nose and mouth is one of the most effective preventative methods (83.5%). Although, all participants stated that they wore a facemask when leaving home, 31% declared that it was due to government regulation. Furthermore, 63.6% mentioned that a facemask is burdensome as they experience breathing difficulties (73.9%) and stated that purchasing a facemask is a financial burden (8.7%). The study results pointed out that participants were aware of the pandemic and the most effective preventative methods. All participants stated that they wore a facemask when leaving home, facing financial burdens and/or breathing difficulties.

Keywords: *attitude, awareness, COVID-19, mask, pandemic*