Abstract

BACKGROUND: Handwashing is an effective and inexpensive way to prevent diarrhea and acute respiratory infections. This study aimed to evaluate the Turkish University students' social hand washing knowledge, practices, skills and related factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: All existing 1st year students in the Medical and Educational Faculty, plus all existing 2nd and 3rd year students in the Medical Faculty of Pamukkale University, Denizli, Turkey, from April to May, 2010, were eligible for the study. Participants filled in a questionnaire. The questionnaire tested the students’ social hand washing knowledge (8 questions), practices (21 questions), and skills (10 questions) and it was prepared using previously published studies. Participants received 1 point for each correct answer provided. Final scores were calculated by summing up the points from all questions in the particular section divided by the number of questions in this section and multiplied by 100. The Family Affluence Scale was used to determine a socioeconomic status (SES).

RESULTS: In all 303 students participated in this study. Participants' age (+/- SD) was 20.1 +/- 1.6 and the age range was between 18 and 32. Sixty two point seven percent of the participants were women. Forty four point nine percent of the participants were medical students. Fifty one point eight percent of the participants were in low SES. Twenty seven point four percent of the participants wash their hands less than 5 times a day, main reason for skipping hand washing was the participants' belief of 'no need' (63.7%). The mean scores (+/- SD) of participants' hand washing knowledge, practices, and skills were 71.2 +/- 20.7, 60.3 +/- 13.4 and 79.7 +/- 18.4, respectively. All scores were significantly higher in women. A multivariate analysis showed that gender was the main factor affecting all scores.

CONCLUSIONS: Increasing quantity and/or quality of available campus based public health educational programs, creating hand-hygiene promotion programs to the general public and using the findings from this study are recommended.