

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Prospective Study on Profile & Pattern of Medicolegal Cases

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION:

BACKGROUND: Medicine is one of the noblest profession and the doctor plays an important role in treating the person and also at the same time has to carry out ethical and legal obligations while discharging his duties. The doctors along with treating the patients also come across medicolegal cases. Medicolegal case represents an integral part of medical practice in the emergency departments and causalities. All the doctors should have the sufficient knowledge of their roles and responsibilities while handling these cases to aid legal justice. A Medico legal case is a case of injury or illness where the attending doctor, after eliciting history and examining the patient, thinks that some investigation by law enforcement agencies is essential to establish and fix responsibility for the case in accordance with the law of the land.

METHODS: This prospective observational study was conducted by the department of forensic medicine at Travancore medical college, Kollam from July 2019 to Dec 2019. A total of 562 cases were included in the study. A comprehensive history taken from the police, patient and the relatives and were recorded in the predesigned proforma and analyzed.

RESULTS: The maximum 325(57.8%) were in the age group of 21-40 years followed by 124 (22.1%) from the age group <20 years. The mean age of the patients was 38.32 (SD12.86) years. The most common type of accident were road traffic accidents which was seen in 247 cases (44%) followed by drunkenness in 144 cases (25.6%) followed by assault and fall in 85 cases (15.1%) and 37 cases (6.6%). Majority of the victims 435 Cases (77.4%) were discharged from hospital after treatment while 41 cases (7.3%) of the cases had absconded or took LAMA (Leave against medical advice). Death was reported in 82 cases (14.6%).

KEYWORDS | Medico-legal case; Road traffic accident; Drunkenness.

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INTRODUCTION

Medicine is one of the noblest profession and the doctor plays an important role in

treating the person and also at the same time has to carry out ethical and legal obligations

while discharging his duties. The doctors along with treating the patients also come across medico-legal cases. Medico-legal case represents an integral part of medical practice in the emergency departments and casualties. All the doctors should have the sufficient knowledge of their roles and responsibilities while handling these cases to aid legal justice. A Medico legal case is a case of injury or illness where the attending doctor, after eliciting history and examining the patient, thinks that some investigation by law enforcement agencies is essential to establish and fix responsibility for the case in accordance with the law of the land.¹ There are many cases which has to be treated as medico legal like all cases of injuries and burns, vehicular, factory or other unnatural, suspected or evident sexual assault and any case which has legal implications. But most of the treating doctors are usually apprehensive in dealing with the medico-legal cases. The general thing where in most of the doctors try to dough out the medicolegal cases as they believe that medicolegal cases implies a lot of disputes, unwanted burden etc. Hence this study was carried out to know the pattern of clinical medico-legal cases registered at tertiary health care centre in Kollam district, kerala.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This prospective observational study was conducted by the department of forensic medicine at Travancore medical college, Kollam from July 2019 to Dec 2019. The study design comprised of thoroughly scrutinized information gathered from the police, patients, relatives of the deceased and hospital records. The data were compiled with a focus on the analysis of the demographic details of the patient, cause of injury, nature of the injury, manner of the incident and outcome of the case.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed using SPSS software version 16. Descriptive statistics like mean and percentages were used to interpret the results.

RESULTS

A total of 562 medicolegal cases were included in this study.

Table 1: Age Wise Distribution Of Study Subjects

| Age Groups (Yrs) | Cases | Percentage |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| <20 | 124 | 22.1 |
| 21-40 | 325 | 57.8 |
| 41-60 | 77 | 13.7 |
| >60 | 36 | 6.9 |
| Total | 562 | 100.0 |

Out of 562 subjects enrolled into the study, maximum 325(57.8%) were in the age group of 21-40 years followed by 124 (22.1%) from the age group <20 years. The mean age of the patients was 38.32 (SD12.86) years.

Table 2: Sex Wise Distribution Of Study Subjects

| Sex | Cases | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Male | 388 | 69 |
| Female | 174 | 31 |
| Total | 562 | 100.0 |

In our study, males, 388 cases (69%) outnumbered females, 174 cases (31%).

Table 3: Distribution of cases according to Type of Accident

| Type of Accident | Cases | Percentage |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| RTA | 247 | 44 |
| Drunkness | 144 | 25.6 |
| Assault | 85 | 15.1 |
| Fall | 37 | 6.6 |
| Snake bite | 23 | 4.1 |
| Poisoning | 14 | 2.5 |
| Workplace injury | 10 | 1.8 |
| Electrocution | 2 | 0.3 |
| Total | 562 | 100.0 |

In our study, the most common type of accident was road traffic accidents which was seen in 247 cases (44%) followed by drunkenness in 144 cases (25.6%) followed by assault and fall in 85 cases (15.1%) and 37 cases (6.6%).

Table 4: Distribution of Cases According to Manner of Cases.

| Manner | Cases | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Accidental | 453 | 80.6 |
| Homicidal | 93 | 16.5 |
| Suicidal | 16 | 2.9 |
| Total | 562 | 100.0 |

Accidental was the most common manner of injuries seen in 453 cases (80.6%) as compared to 93 cases of homicidal (16.5%).

Table 5: Distribution of Cases According to Outcome of Cases

| Outcome | Cases | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Discharged | 435 | 77.4 |
| LAMA | 41 | 7.3 |
| Referred | 4 | 0.7 |
| Death | 82 | 14.6 |
| TOTAL | 82 | 100 |

Majority of the victims 435 Cases (77.4%) were discharged from hospital after treatment while 41 cases (7.3%) of the cases had absconded or took LAMA (Leave against medical advice). Death was reported in 82 cases (14.6%).

DISCUSSION

Medico-legal cases play an important role in highlighting the value system among individuals in the community which in turn will help the concerned authorities to devise strategies in order to reduce these incidences.

Age groups of the present study shown that age range of 21-40 years (57.8%) were at higher risk group. The results were in accordance with Mir MS et al² and Siddappa S et al³ who noted that maximum incidence of patients belonged to the same age group. The major reason being this age group is the most active and are tend to involve themselves in tripping and riding and also this age group being the risk taker age

group among others. Majority of the subjects were male (69%) which were similar to study by Trangadia MM et al⁴, Hussaini SN et al⁵ who noted 72.77% and 74.03% of cases in males respectively. Higher incidence in males may be due to the fact that the males were indulged in outdoor activities as they are the earning members of the family.

The most common type of accident was road traffic accidents which was seen in (44%) of cases followed by drunkenness in (16.5%) of cases which were consistent with the studies conducted by Trangadia MM et al⁴, Yattoo GH et al⁶ where in road traffic accidents constituted majority of medico-legal cases. This is may be attributed to the fact that India being such a populated country with increasing industrialization and also Kerala being one of the developed state but with narrow and poor road condition, Road traffic accidents are quite common and contribute to the major chunk of medico-legal cases in the hospitals. Accidental injuries was the most common manner of injuries seen in (80.6%) of cases which was similar to the study conducted by Mir MS et al² but it was in contrast with the study done by Yadav A et al⁷ where in homicidal was the most commonest manner. Majority of the cases (77.4%) were discharged from hospital after treatment which were similar to the studies conducted by Mir MS et al² and Garg V et al.⁸ Kerala being one of the highly literate state where in the people are educated and are also awareness about the health are high compared to some other states. The health sector is very strong and also the effectiveness of early initiation of treatment in emergency cases and also facilities to deal with medical emergencies contribute to the fact that majority of the cases walk back healthy.

CONCLUSION

From this study, we can conclude that medico-legal case represents an integral part of medical practice and the concerned doctor should be ready to address it in terms of meticulous examination, proper documentation and certification of medico-legal cases. Road traffic accidents constituted the majority of

medicolegal cases followed by drunkenness. The present study also shows that the maximum number of medico-legal cases were accidental in nature. This study also helps in giving vital information about the pattern of medicolegal cases to concerned administrators, health officials, social workers, NGOs to devise strategies in order to reduce these incidence and also at the same time the doctor's needs to

be better trained in handling these medicolegal cases.

Conflict of Interest:

None declared

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Ethical approval:

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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