

**Stress perception among meditators who are affected by tsunami**K.G. Somasiri<sup>1</sup>, C.L. Samaranyake<sup>2</sup>, C.P. Nissanka<sup>2</sup> and A.J.P.M. Jayawardena<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, Galle<sup>2</sup> Teaching Hospital Karapitiya, Galle, <sup>3</sup> Sri Jayawardenapura Hospital, Kotte**Abstract**

*Stress is a day to day experience. When measuring stress, two components can be identified; stress perception and stress response. The stress perception is measured by administering questionnaires. The objective of the study was to compare the perceived stress among meditators affected by the recent tsunami with those not affected. The Sinhala translation of PSS was administered to meditators in two meditation centers in Galle three months after the December 26th tsunami. The data were analyzed to find out the mean difference in the perceived Stress Score (SS) between meditators who were affected and those who were not affected by the tsunami. There were 26 subjects affected by tsunami and 13 not affected. The SS (17.7±4.9) of affected subjects was higher than those unaffected (13.1±6.8). Stress perception in tsunami affected mediators after three months of tsunami was significantly higher than those not affected by tsunami ( $p=0.029$ ).*

**Introduction**

Stress is caused by stressors such as noise, break of sleep, fear etc. Stress is a day to day experience. A working definition for stress is the perceived inability to cope with the perceived demands decided after cognitive evaluation. People subjected to natural disasters lose their loved ones and property. They like to regain the lost property and loved ones. Inability to regain them would lead to stress. For the purpose of quantification, stress can be divided into two components; stress perception and stress response. Though it is difficult to measure the level of stress in an individual, there are different methods of assessing stress. The perception of stress is measured by administering standard questionnaires and self rating questionnaires. Different types of questionnaires have been used to assess the perception of stress in medical students(1,2,3). Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and Psychological General Well Being (PGWB) are some standard questionnaires. In this study, PSS was used as the tool. It was developed by the American Sociological Association (4). It was translated to Sinhala and validated to use as a self administered questionnaire(5). The values obtained for medical students without examination stress was similar to the results of the studies done in the USA.

**Methodology**

The study was conducted three months after the December 26<sup>th</sup> tsunami. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Galle. The Sinhala translation of PSS was administered to meditators in two meditation centers in Galle. The data were analyzed to find out the mean difference of perceived Stress Score (SS) between meditators who were affected and not affected by the tsunami.

**Results**

There were 39 subjects included in the study. Out of 39, 26 were affected by tsunami and 13 were not affected. There were only 2 males included in the study and both were affected by tsunami. The mean age of the tsunami affected individuals were 65.9 years and it was 56.5 years for unaffected. The stress score (SS) for tsunami affected individuals was 17.7 and it was 13.1 for tsunami unaffected subjects. The difference in the SS was significant ( $p=0.029$ ).

**Discussion**

PSS was a reliable indicator of stress perception. The instrument was translated to Sinhala and validated to use as a self-administered questionnaire to measure stress perception. The values obtained for Americans were similar to the values obtained for medical students in Sri Lanka. The SS of the tsunami affected meditators was significantly higher than the SS of tsunami unaffected meditators. SS of tsunami unaffected meditators were similar to age matched group in America.

**Conclusion**

Stress perception in tsunami affected mediators after three months of tsunami was higher than the meditators not affected by tsunami.

**References**

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