

## Evidence-based practice among speech therapists in Sri Lanka

Wanigasooriya I. G.<sup>1\*</sup> and Colonne U.T.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

[\\*inekawanigasooriya@gmail.com](mailto:inekawanigasooriya@gmail.com)

**Background:** Evidence-based practice (EBP) is essential to providing quality health care. Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the process of providing high-quality health care through research findings, practical knowledge, and client preferences and values. Evidence-based health care is the careful application of current best evidence in making choices regarding individual patient care or health service delivery. Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) treat communication difficulties and swallowing difficulties. Currently, their range of services provided is wide, and high-quality results can be obtained through EBP. Evidence-based practice provides superior service to people with speech, language, and swallowing difficulties.

**Objectives:** Our study aimed 1- To identify the use of evidence-based practice among speech and language therapists in Sri Lanka, 2- To determine the speech and language therapists' knowledge on evidence-based practice, 3- To determine the speech and language therapists' skills on use of the evidence-based practice and 4- To determine the association between current knowledge skills and usage of EBP among SLTs, and their socio-demographic variables.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was used to identify the level of knowledge, skills, and use of EBP among SLTs. Altogether 169 participants completed a self-administrative online survey questionnaire with 32 rank order questions (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed descriptively and presented as means, standard deviations (SD), frequencies, and percentages. The Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test were used appropriately to determine the association of current knowledge, skills, and usage of EBP among SLTs with their socio-demographic variables (gender, age range, educational qualifications, client group, work setting).

**Results:** The majority of SLTs had heard about EBP (71.9%) and had an idea about EBP (95.9%). However, 70% of responses (agreed or strongly agreed) were obtained for all other questions asked related to the knowledge of EBP. Forty percent to 55% of participants confirmed that they have average skills on EBP. 50% of participants confirmed that they use EBP, have access to EBP, or read research publications, sometimes. 30% of participants were using EBP, frequently. In general, a significant association was not revealed ( $P < 0.05$ ) between knowledge, skills, and usage of EBP among SLTs, and the five demographic variables.

**Conclusion:** The present study showed that Sri Lankan SLTs have good to fair knowledge and skills toward EBP. The majority of participants confirmed that they are sometimes using EBP. All these current practices of EBP are not influenced by their gender, age, work setting,

practicing client group, or highest educational qualification. However, there was a significant association between gender and current usage of EBP.

**Keywords:** *Evidence-Based Practice (EBP), Speech and Language Therapists, Knowledge, Skills, Use*