

# THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN IMPROVING SERVICE QUALITY OF HEALTH WORK ASSISTANTS IN GOVERNMENT AYURVEDA HOSPITALS IN SABARAGAMUWA PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

Manohari, N.<sup>1\*</sup> and Aslam, M.S.M.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Provincial Ayurveda Hospital, Sabaragamuwa Ayurveda Department, Ratnapura, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka*

\**aslam@mgt.sab.ac.lk*

In the present context of medical treatments, Ayurveda is influential among the general public in many ways. It was noted that existing Ayurveda treatments by Health Work Assistants have led to a chaotic situation requiring considerable empirical investigation. This study intended to uncover the significant role of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) along with the knowledge and skills of Health Work Assistants (HWA) in order to improve the service quality of HWA at government Ayurveda hospitals. The qualitative case study design was adapted to unveil multiple realities from the natural setting. Data were collected from 25 HWAs and 12 medical officer in-charges using semi-structured interviews. The verbatim transcribed interviewed data from both respondent groups were analysed using the content analysis method. Findings revealed unclear criteria of the recruitment and selection process, political intervention, and uneven distribution of knowledge and skills of HWA are the causes behind poor service. Although HWAs' training and the skill-building process have taken place through on-the-job training, peer group and off-the-job training, consistent and formally established CPDs are not found. The findings intensify the inevitability of appropriate policies on the recruitment and selection process and regular CPD to enhance the knowledge and skills for improving service quality. Further, the study revealed that many of HWAs are currently engaged with more responsible duties other than their duties assigned by the appointment letter. Responsibilities and services beyond the formal duties intensify the CPD of HWA inevitably.

**Keywords:** Ayurvedic health services, ayurvedic health policies, continuous professional development, health work assistants, service quality