

## **Health information seeking and information encountering of female undergraduates: a pilot study at University of Moratuwa**

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### **Abstract**

Health literacy can be explained as one's ability to obtain process and understand health information and services to enable sound health decision making. A healthy population is an asset to any country and directly related to the economic growth and development. Health literacy is fundamentally important to maintain a population's health. A national survey on emerging issues among adolescents, recognized health literacy as a life skill since adolescence has recently gained recognition as a critical phase of life. On the other hand, health literacy as a life skill will have a greater impact on adult health. Undergraduates just passed adolescence will be future leaders of the society and female undergraduates will be future mothers in the community. This study was conducted as a part of a research on prevention and control of breast cancer and explored the health information seeking and information encountering behaviour of female undergraduates of the University of Moratuwa. Adopting the survey method, a semi- structured questionnaire was developed as the research instrument and consisted of 4 parts namely socio demographic data, knowledge on breast cancer, knowledge on screening of breast cancer and information seeking behaviour. Questionnaires were randomly distributed among 245 female undergraduates of three faculties of the University of Moratuwa who were willing to participate in the survey. Of 245 respondents, 95 undergraduates belonged to the Faculty of Architecture; 71 undergraduates belonged to the Faculty of Engineering and 79 undergraduates belonged to the Faculty of Information Technology. Though health literacy is not a novel concept majority of the respondents were not aware about it. Only a few participants were able to explain the concept of health literacy. Majority of the respondents understood that health education was vital

