

**Proportion and factors associated with cataract among patients attending the ophthalmology clinic of Teaching Hospital Kalutara**

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**Introduction:** Cataract is a leading cause of vision impairment and blindness globally, with varying prevalence across regions. In Sri Lanka, studies like the Kandy Eye Study have highlighted key risk factors, but there is a lack of specific data for the Kalutara district. This study aimed to determine the proportion and associated factors of cataract among patients attending the Ophthalmology Clinic at Teaching Hospital Kalutara, a well-populated center that offers dedicated ophthalmic services and thus providing representative regional data.

**Materials and Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from November 2023 to October 2024 among 375 adult patients systematically selected via consecutive sampling. Data were collected using a pretested, partially interviewer-based, self-administered questionnaire available in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Cataract diagnosis was confirmed by a medical professional using a slit lamp. Associations were assessed using chi-square tests at a  $p < 0.05$  significance level.

**Results:** The proportion of cataract among the study participants was 40.0% ( $n=150$ ). A significant association was found between the occurrence of cataract and factors such as age (50 years and above,  $p=0.000$ ), male sex ( $p=0.039$ ), education level ( $p=0.013$ ), marital status ( $p = 0.030$ ), and family history of cataract ( $p=0.000$ ). Furthermore, a history of chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension ( $p=0.001$ ), use of medications for chronic conditions ( $p=0.000$ ), smoking ( $p < 0.001$ ), alcohol consumption ( $p=0.035$ ), and exposure to radiation ( $p=0.000$ ) and chemicals ( $p < 0.001$ ) were also significantly associated with cataract.

**Discussion:** A substantial proportion of patients attending the ophthalmology clinic at THK were diagnosed with cataract. The findings underscore that cataract is associated with a combination of non-modifiable factors like age and family history, and modifiable factors such as chronic disease management, lifestyle choices, and occupational exposures. The study emphasizes the need for integrated public health strategies, including community-based screening, enhanced management of chronic diseases, lifestyle modification programs, and occupational safety measures to reduce the burden of cataract in the district.

**Keywords:** Cataract, proportion, associated factors, Teaching Hospital Kalutara