

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To determine the dietary and lifestyle factors that are associated with dysmenorrhea (DM) in women living in Trinidad.

DESIGN & SETTING: Case control study design in which fifty five dysmenorrheic women (cases) forty eight controls, ages 18-30 were obtained from public, private out patient clinics and the general public to answer a semi-quantitative food frequency questionnaire. Cases were determined using the Visual Analogue Pain Scale, in which participants rated their menstrual pain from 0 -10. Any participant rating their pain intensity 5 and over was considered a case. Life style factors such as cigarette smoking and exposure to cigarette smoke, alcohol consumption, physical activity, perceived stress and body image perception were also investigated. Perceived stress was measured using the Stanford Perceived Stress Scale.

RESULTS: Beef was found to be significantly associated ($P=0.004$) with DM. Olive oil ($P= 0.04$), corn oil (0.024) and margarine ($P= 0.041$) were also found to be associated with DM. Lifestyle factors such as cigarette smoking and exposure to cigarette smoke, physical activity, alcohol consumption and perceived stress were not found to be significantly associated with dysmenorrhea.

CONCLUSIONS: High consumption of beef and other foods high in arachidonic acid and linoleic acid leads to the increased incidence of DM in women living in Trinidad.