

...ABSTRACT

Determination of the Nutritional Status of High-Risk Antenatal Women in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica

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A cross-sectional study was done of forty-eight women attending the High Risk Antenatal Clinic at the Black River Hospital in the parish of St. Elizabeth during the three month period of September to November, 1999, to determine their nutritional status. The data collection instrument included a twenty-four hour diet recall as well as a food frequency questionnaire.

The study group included teenagers (41.7%), women twenty years and older (20%) and women thirty to forty-four years-old (38.3%). Twenty-seven women were pregnant for the first time while 18 women were multiparous and 3 women were grand multiparous. There was more than 50% unemployment and over 50% of the study group included students, housewives and unskilled women. Of note, there were no tertiary graduates or any member of the Technical, Professional or Managerial occupational groups. All forty-eight women completed primary (56%) or secondary (44%) schooling.

Fifteen women had confirmed medical conditions or diseases including anaemia, asthma, congenital heart disease, gout, hypertension, Rhesus negative blood group and sickle cell disease. Thirty-eight women experienced side effects of pregnancy, with high prevalences of heartburn and vomiting at 54% and 45.8% respectively. Thirty-eight women consumed pica agents such as dirt, cake soap and ashes, marl with ice showing the highest prevalence of 58.3%. For the first and second trimester periods of 0-28 weeks weight gain was in excess of the range while weight gain for the third trimester (29-40 weeks) was within the range for the period.

The nutrient intakes used to determine nutritional status were the Recommended Daily Allowance for the age group which included calories, protein and fat. Deficiencies expressed as a percentage of the RDA were vitamins C and D, calcium and iron. Adequate nutrient sources were demonstrated from the responses to the food frequency questionnaire. The prevalence of anaemia was 23.8% and close to one half of the group (47.9%) took iron supplements.

The study group was already at risk due to their low socio-economic status and were deemed equally at a nutritional risk due to the notable excesses and deficiencies in their nutrient intake.