

ABSTRACT

Factors influencing low birth weight at the University Hospital of the West Indies, Jamaica. A review of births January to March 1996

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A case control study was done on mothers who delivered low birth weight babies during a three month period at the maternity ward of the University Hospital of The West Indies. Fifty cases were identified and 50 controls were selected according to the date and time of birth. A case was defined according to WHO international standard, as an infant weighing less than 2,500 grams, up to and including 2,499 grams (WHO Bulletin, 1992). A control was any infant who weighed over 2,500 grams but less than 4,000 grams. A questionnaire was used to collect data from these mothers of the infants.

The study was designed to determine the association between the dependent variable , low birth weight and the independent variables which were divided into social and medical factors.

From the results of the study, the incidence of low birth weight infants was 100/1000. More medical factors than social factors were associated with low birth weight babies. Factors statistically associated (p value < 0.05) were educational achievement, duration of pregnancy, blood pressure on admission to hospital, previous medical conditions and haemoglobin levels.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will help health professionals working in maternal and child health to plan intensive antenatal programmes to address these risk factors.