ABSTRACT

An assessment of the clinical laboratory services and patients' knowledge of these services at the antenatal clinic at a major teaching hospital in Kingston, Jamaica

Tyrone R. Belle

The clinical laboratory can be considered one of the pillars of modern medicine. The accuracy and early detection with which many diseased conditions are diagnosed, hinge on the prompt response and utilization of the laboratory services by the physician.

This study assessed the laboratory services and patients' knowledge of these services at the antenatal clinic of a major teaching hospital in Kingston, Jamaica. The study was conducted during the months December 1992 through April 1993, by means of accessing laboratory records, patients' dockets and the administering of a questionnaire.

Findings analyzed from data collected from the dockets and questionnaires, revealed that the antenatal clinic makes a heavy demand on the clinical laboratory services; accounting for approximately one-third of all requests made to the laboratory by the hospital for haemoglobin, haemoglobin electrophoresis and the V.D.R.L.test.

An assessment of the patients' knowledge, of these tests indicated that a high percentage of patients knew of, or were well aware of the conditions and abnormalities associated with each test.

The study also revealed a certain level of awareness by the patients of the consequences of not having prompt antenatal care. This was evidenced by the fact that 89.1% of them attended clinic before the third month of pregnancy.

It was concluded from the study also that the level of anaemia among antenatal patients, as suggested by earlier findings has been substantially reduced.

Findings also indicate that most pregnancies occur in the twenty to twenty-nine year old age group, and it is postulated that unless the family planning authorities target this age group, the clinical laboratory will continue to experience a steep increase in the demands made by the antenatal clinic on the services it provides.