

ABSTRACT

Pregnancy induced hypertension, accompanied by proteinuria, is a persistent and important complication of pregnancy. Research into the causes of this condition is ongoing. One aspect of this research involves the investigation of the role of nutrition related factors.

In this study the folate status of pre-eclamptic subjects was examined to determine if this might be a factor in the disease etiology. The study subjects were Jamaican primigravidae with pre-eclampsia and controls matched for age, weight and gestational age.

Red cell folate and serum B12 content were measured in all subjects, using a radioimmunoassay method. Similar measurements were carried out on a smaller group of cord blood samples from the offspring of the two groups.

Each subject was also administered a stress test for functional folate deficiency. This consisted of an oral dose of L-histidine monochloride monohydrate followed by urine collection and analysis for homininoglutamic acid (FIGLU). In the event of a functional folate deficiency, FIGLU would be expected to be elevated.

No significant differences were found between the two groups with respect to their folate status. Based on these results, it was concluded that in the study population, neither folate nor B12 status are compromised by the development of pre-eclampsia.