

ABSTRACT

This is a retrospective case-control study of 111 perinatal deaths and a descriptive analysis of 52 infants after the early neonatal period, done in the area of the Jaffna Municipal Council from 1.7.85 to 30.6.86.

The perinatal death rate of 43.3/1000 total births, still birth rate of 23.8/1000 total births, and infant mortality rate of 40.8/1000 live births are high when compared with the corresponding Sri Lankan figures.

The cause of perinatal deaths were due to maternal causes(46.8%), obstetric causes(21.6%) foetal causes(15.3%) and placental causes(4.5%). In 11.8 % of the deaths the cause was not known.

The mothers in their early twenties had the best perinatal outcome. Mothers whose education was poor, those who had poor antenatal care during the third trimester, those who had previous histories of perinatal deaths and those who did severe work, especially in the third trimester were at risk of their babies dying in utero or within one week of birth. Offsprings of consanguineous marriage were at higher risk of deaths. Families of fishermen as a socio-economic cum occupational group were most vulnerable for these deaths.

Complications during pregnancy especially breech, toxemia and haemorrhage and the history of having taken unspecified drugs during pregnancy increased the rate of perinatal mortality.

Babies with low birth weight and those who were born preterm were at more risk of dying during the perinatal period.

Deaths of infants after the early neonatal period especially during the post neonatal period were due to gastroenteritis and respiratory infection. Environmental factors were found to influence these adversely.

As an epidemiological study for the improvement of health services of the Jaffna Municipality, recommendations have been made. Some of these observations and recommendations may be applicable for comparable situations. This study identifies areas for future health service research.