

(I)

ABSTRACT

This was a retrospective study on the utilization of antenatal, natal and postnatal care services provided under the Health Unit system in an area comprising of the three Health Units Ja-ela, Wattala and Ragama, with a combined population of 246,500 in 1988. The phenomenon of by-passing of local antenatal clinics and by-passing of local hospitals for delivery was also studied.

A random sampling technique was used to select a sample which consisted of 400 mothers who had delivered live babies between 1st September 1988 and 28th February 1989, both days inclusive. The interviewers who were public health staff from outside the study area, visited 6120 households and used a pre-coded questionnaire. The survey commenced on 11th March 1989 and lasted one month. The postnatal period was limited to the first ten days after partus.

Only 51% of mothers had utilized the services of the field antenatal clinic. Income, educational level and employment status of the mother were found to be related to field clinic attendance. Field clinic attendance during past pregnancies was found to influence clinic attendance in the present pregnancy.

Only 54% of pregnant mothers had been visited at home by the Public Health Midwife, and 69% of them had attended a local field antenatal clinic an average of 3.8 times. Home visiting by the midwife was found to have a statistically significant influence on field clinic attendance.

(II)

Only 2% of mothers had delivered at home. All deliveries had been conducted by trained health personnel.

Only 44% of postpartum mothers had been visited at home by the midwife. The quality of care provided at these visits had been unsatisfactory.

48% of mothers had by-passed the local field antenatal clinic. By-passing could have been reduced by improved home visiting by the midwife and by improving the facilities of the local field clinics.

47% of mothers had by-passed the North Colombo Teaching Hospital for delivery elsewhere, while 80% had by-passed the smaller hospitals at Ja-ela and Pamunugama. The educational level of both the mother and her husband and their family income were found to influence by-passing for delivery.