



Abstract

Pregnancy related physical wellbeing and safe pregnancy takes a major portion of the overall goal of the maternal care program. This said program adopts raising awareness and developing appropriate attitudes among clients. This study has been conducted to describe the knowledge and attitudes of pregnancy related physical wellbeing and safe pregnancy among pregnant women in Hambantota district.

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted for a sample of 422 pregnant women who were admitted for delivery to the two main hospitals of the district. Those who have completed 34th weeks of pregnancy were included in the study and a structured interviewer administered questionnaire was used as the study instrument. Data collection was done for a period of 3 weeks and test-retest was done to assure the validity of the data.

All selected 422 pregnant women were enrolled to the study. The socio-demographic characteristics of the study population resembled to that of the district profile. The study population consisted of 55.2% from higher social class, 32.7% from the middle social class and 12.1% from the lower social class. Majority (98%) were married. Teenage and women aged more than 35 years made 20.6% of the population.

Responses for the knowledge component were grouped according to the periods of the pregnancy and then, categorized the level of knowledge in each period as adequate and inadequate.

The results revealed that the majority of mothers had adequate knowledge on factors related to antenatal period (77.3%) and postnatal period (61.6%) while, the percentages of mothers who had adequate knowledge on factors related to pre-pregnancy period and labor period were 25.4% and 13.8% respectively.

One-fifth of the study population was not aware about pre-pregnancy Folic acid consumption (21.3%) and about pre-pregnancy Rubella immunization (19.9%) while, 67.7% of pregnant mothers did not know about pre-pregnancy nutrition assessment. Education status and social class of the participants were associated with an adequate knowledge on pre-pregnancy related physical wellbeing and safe pregnancy.

It was seen that majority (92.2%) of pregnant mothers didn't know about de-worm treatment as a method of preventing anemia while, 36.5% of them did not know about iron tablets as a method to prevent anemia in pregnancy. Two third (69.2%) of the study population did not know about the antenatal malaria prophylaxis treatment in spite of this district being a malarious area.

Only 2 danger signs during antenatal period were known by majority of the study population namely, bleeding through vagina (59.5%) and reduced fetal movements (57.1%) where swelling of calves with pain, recurrent faintishness, severe headache, severe tiredness, high fever and fits were known by less than one fifth.

Percentages of mothers who had adequate knowledge on aspects of labor were, breathing techniques (12.8%), uterine contractions rhythm (13.3%) and change in position of the fetus (29.6%). Those who were having any risk condition was found to have an inadequate level of knowledge on labour period related physical wellbeing and safe pregnancy ($p < 0.05$).

Majority of the sample (93.8%) knew that they can become pregnant within 42 days after delivery and 89.6% of the mothers knew at least one post partum danger sign though 32% didn't know that combine oral contraceptive pill should not be used within 1st 6 months after delivery. Also important danger signs like post partum diarrhea, recurrent faintishness and calf pain with swelling were known by only 10% of the sample.

Regarding attitudes towards pregnancy related physical wellbeing and safe pregnancy, a majority (63.5%) agreed to allow the spouse to be with them at labor room while another 18.5% mothers strongly agreed to the said statement. Antenatal testing of blood for HIV along with other tests was agreed by a majority (76.5%). More than three fourth (76.5%) of study population disagree to reduce the current schedule of antenatal clinic visits after 28weeks.

Study revealed poor knowledge on factors related to pre pregnancy and labour periods than antenatal and post partum period. But, although more than half of the population had adequate knowledge on factors related antenatal and postpartum period, knowledge on nutritional aspects and danger sings during pregnancy needs more attention. Education level of the mother was associated with the level of knowledge on pre-pregnancy, antenatal and post partum periods. Therefore antenatal and pre-pregnancy health education programs should be strengthened considering all periods of pregnancy and risk conditions. A special attention should be paid to improve the knowledge of mothers with risk conditions.