

ABSTRACT

This community based study was undertaken to describe postpartum morbidities, self reported health and their health seeking behaviour of mothers within 6 weeks of postpartum period in the Vavuniya District. It also examined the relationship between postpartum morbidity and some socio demographic factors, obstetric factors and cultural factors.

A cross sectional study was conducted and necessary data was collected by a community survey using an interviewer administrated questionnaire. A total number of 540 postpartum mothers were interviewed for the study. The interviews were conducted by trained interviewers (public health midwives) at the respondents' houses during August and September 2007.

In the study sample 97.9% of mothers in the area had reported at least one postpartum morbidity. But majority (73%) of postpartum mothers said their self rated health was "good" within 6 weeks of postpartum period .Even though proportion of mothers with postpartum morbidities was high only 46% had consulted a health worker regarding their problem. Median number of postpartum morbidities reported by postpartum mother was 5 with minimum 0 to maximum 14.

Number of total reported morbidities varied significantly with MOH area, ethnicity, highest educational attainment, and total family income. Mean number of total reported morbidities was high in mothers from Cheddikulam MOH area (mean = 6) and low in mothers from Vavuniya South area (mean = 3). Mothers aged greater than 35 years reported higher mean number (mean = 5.4) of total morbidities than

others. Sinhalese mothers reported lower mean number (mean = 3.3) of total morbidities than others. Mothers educated up to grade 5 reported higher mean number (mean = 5.4) of total morbidities than others. Poorer mothers (total monthly income less than Rs 3000/-) reported higher mean number (mean = 5.3) of total morbidities than others.

Commonly reported morbidities by the study population were back pain (57.0%), fatigue (51.9%) and perineal pain (46.7%). Some of the other important morbidities reported were headache (33%) sleep disturbance (26.5%), constipation (23.7%), breast problems (21.1%), calf muscle pain (20.0%), anal- incontinence (16.5%), fever (19.6%), gaping/pus from episiotomy (12.6%) and vaginal discharge with bad smell (9.4%). Most of the reported morbidities improved with time except fatigue and sleep disturbance.

Proportion of mothers who had episiotomy during delivery was very high (63.8%) and 12.6% of them had gaping /pus from the episiotomy. It was also observed that above morbidity were more common among mothers group whose episiotomy wound sutured after 30 minutes.

The cultural factors related food personal hygiene, breast feeding and resumption of sexual relationship were still persisting in this community. Some of these practices affected the health negatively. For example constipation associated with poor in take of fiber diet and fruits and women who had used cloth napkin were 2.35 times more likely to report vaginal discharge with bad smell when compared to women who had used disposable sanitary pads

Almost 98% of mothers in the area had reported at least a postpartum morbidity. Back pain, fatigue and perineal pain were reported by more than 45% of the mothers. In spite of this only 46% of the mothers had consulted a health worker regarding their problems and 73% rated their health status as good.

Key words: postpartum morbidities, self rated health, back pain in postpartum mothers, anal incontinence, cultural factors in post partum, health seeking behaviour, episiotomy