Abstract 1

Knowledge on maintaining a healthy body weight among pregnant women admitted to the obstetric wards of Teaching Hospital of Jaffna

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Background and objectives: Maintaining a healthy body weight during pregnancy refers to achieving appropriate gestational weight gain based on pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI). Inappropriate weight gain is associated with adverse outcomes such as gestational diabetes, hypertensive disorders, preterm birth, and low birth weight. This study aimed to assess the knowledge regarding maintaining a healthy body weight among pregnant women admitted to the obstetric wards of the Teaching Hospital, Jaffna.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 303 pregnant women using systematic sampling. A structured, pretested questionnaire was used to collect data on sociodemographic details, knowledge about weight maintenance, and pregnancy-related factors. Knowledge scores were categorized as good (≥75%) and poor (<75%) based on percentage of correct responses. Chi-square test assessed associations at $p<0.05$ significance level. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Results: 81.5% (n=247) demonstrated good knowledge while 18.5% (n=56) had poor knowledge, with a mean score of 84.8% (SD=13.4). Significant associations were observed between knowledge and income ($p=0.013$), education level ($p=0.005$), and presence of healthcare professionals in the family ($p<0.001$). Women who had tertiary education showed the highest proportion of high marks (50%). Current pregnancy complications showed significant association ($p=0.019$), while previous complications ($p=0.866$) and parity ($p=0.993$) showed no significant associations with knowledge.

Conclusions: While overall knowledge was satisfactory, disparities exist across income and educational levels. Focused antenatal educational interventions are recommended, particularly targeting women with lower income, lower educational attainment, and those without healthcare professionals in their families, to ensure better maternal and infant health outcomes.

Keywords: healthy body weight, pregnancy, maternal knowledge, antenatal care, weight gain