

THE EFFECT OF ANTIHELMINTHIC THERAPY ON VARIATION OF  
IRON STATUS OF PLANTATION WORKERS DURING PREGNANCY

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The interventions against anaemia during pregnancy in the plantation sector includes giving oral iron/folate supplements and antihelminthic therapy (AHT) with mebendazole without examination of stools.

To evaluate the beneficial effects of AHT, the iron status of pregnant plantation workers who received AHT (n=54) was compared with those living under the same conditions who did not receive AHT (n=76). All women received oral/folate supplements. The haemoglobin levels and iron status of all women was determined in early and late stages of pregnancy. Serum ferritin levels (which decrease in iron deficiency) and erythrocyte protoporphyrin levels (which increase in iron deficiency) were determined to assess iron status.

A significant ( $p=0.001$ ) positive change in haemoglobin (+1.6 g/dl) was noted during pregnancy in women who received AHT as compared to those who did not receive therapy (-0.89g/dl). A significant increase in serum ferritin levels and decrease in erythrocyte protoporphyrin levels ( $P=0.05$ ) also occurred in the subjects given AHT.

The finding of AHT resulting in a significant improvement in Hb and iron status suggests hookworm infestation as an important factor in the aetiology of anaemia among plantation workers.

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