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Knowledge, attitudes and practices of pregnant mothers on maternal nutrition in the Pannala MOH area

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Maternal nutrition during pregnancy is crucial in reducing maternal and infant mortality, morbidity and adverse birth outcomes. Even though a mother's Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) on nutrition is one of the key determinants of nutritional status, no study has been conducted to assess the KAP of pregnant mothers on nutrition in the Pannala MOH division. Hence, this cross-sectional clinics based study was conducted to ascertain pregnant mothers' KAP towards maternal nutrition using a pre-tested interviewer administrated questionnaire. A total of 150 mothers were interviewed. The KAP levels of pregnant mothers were evaluated on scales of 0 to 23, 0 to 14 and 0 to 9, respectively. Scores were given on the basis of the response of subjects to each question. Each positive/correct answer was given 1 mark and negative/incorrect answer was given 0 marks. The mean value of the total score was calculated and according to these mean values, the scores were divided as low and high for knowledge, positive and negative for attitudes and good and poor for practices. Further, simple descriptive analysis (n & %) was used. Age of pregnant mothers ranged from 19 to 40 years with a mean age of 27.3 ± 4.59 years and the entire sample was literate. The results showed that 71% of mothers had a higher knowledge level on nutrition with the mean score of 19.4 ± 2.18 . Out of the total, 12%, 42% and 47% of pregnant mothers knew about energy rich food, major nutrients present in animal foods and yellow colour foods respectively. They had a good knowledge about the importance of having calcium (98%), folate (86%) and small frequent meals (92%) during pregnancy. In this study, 88% of mothers had positive attitudes on nutrition during pregnancy with the mean score of 12.18 ± 1.38 . Although most of the mothers had positive attitudes, only 30% of mothers had a positive attitude on the bad effects of high consumption of vitamin A. Further, 36% of mothers avoided some foods during pregnancy due to traditional beliefs. A majority (85%) of mothers had good practices on nutrition with the mean score of 8.19 ± 0.82 . Ninety percent of mothers consumed a variety of food and iodized salt, 96% did not drink tea soon after meals and 95% did not skip any meals during pregnancy. Even though only 54% of mothers consumed "Thiriposha" daily, no one consumed fast foods daily. When selecting food items, 75% considered the nutritive value of foods. The results showed that there was no relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and KAP of mothers regarding nutrition during pregnancy. This study concluded that the mothers had a good knowledge, positive attitudes and followed appropriate practices regarding nutrition during pregnancy.

Keywords: Pregnant mothers, maternal nutrition, knowledge, attitudes, practices