A STUDY ON MATERNAL ANAEMIA AND THE EFFECTS ON THE NURTURING WOMEN OF TAMILNADU

Thesis

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by

SHAKILA SUGUNA SUNDARI, M.Sc., M.Phil., B.Ed.,

Research Supervisor

Dr. M. PUNITHAMBAL, M.Sc. (Psy), M.A. (Eng), M.A. (W.S.), M.Ed, Ph.D.,

Former Professor of Education

Department of **WOMEN'S STUDIES**

Mother Teresa Women's University

Kodaikanal

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CONCLUSION

Good health is of prime importance in the world today. Good health allows one to enjoy life. Possessing good health is one of the basic essentials in life which isof prime importance to every individual. Good health is necessary not only for the welfare of the individual but also to the family, society and the world at large. Good health is considered as wealth to the individual and there by an asset to the family. One should also take precautions to build and maintain good health. Anaemia is one of the most common and serious health problems occurring worldwide. Anaemia is rampant in the world today and globally several millions of people are its victims. It affects people worldwide irrespective of age, race, and ethnicity and affects individuals in both developing and developed countries.

This study was carried out because of the high prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women and its vulnerability among lactating mothers especially in the rural background and its association with low literacy and educational level and poor economic background. Also since malnutrition and imbalanced diet are common among women especially in rural areas which are the main causes for maternal anaemia, this study was carried out. Finally because maternal anaemia is known to result in adverse outcomes both to the mother and the child and there is a dire need to spread awareness about anaemia and its prevention since prevalence still remains high among nurturing women despite several health programmes.

Most importantly the researcher went back to the study area (The Bethesda Hospital) to distribute anaemia awareness hand outs to the

nurturing women. These hand outs were also put up on the notice boards of the hospital and as well as given to health workers for distribution. These awareness hand outs were in the regional language, Tamil. This study was conducted not only for welfare of women but ultimately for the welfare of the family and the entire society. The Bethesda hospital in Ambur in Tamil Nadu, South India, where this study was conducted provided an apt setting for this study since the hospital caters to the health needs of a very large segment of the rural population. People from the neighbouring places of Ambur and districts surrounding it benefit from the health care provided by this hospital. Nurturing women were not only from Vellore district but also the neighbouring districts of Salem, Tiruvallur, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri participated in the present study. This meant women from many other places and districts were being a part and thereby being benefited by this study. The sample size was 540 nurturing women who were at the hospital for antenatal checkup/were at the delivery ward/were available till 35-40 days for telephonic interview during the post natal period. The overall mean haemoglobin among the respondents was 10.5 g/dl. The overall prevalence of anaemia was 347 (64.3%). It was inferred that majority of anaemic women had moderate anaemia 195 (36.1%), followed by mild anaemia 144 (26.7%) and only least number of women had severe anaemia 8 (1.5%). There is a significant difference in mean haemoglobin in relation to gestational period among nurturing women. There is a significant association between anaemia and gestational period among nurturing women. Maternal and foetal outcomes analyzed in the present study did not show any significant association, this may be because of the less severity of anaemia. Significant associations were found between most of the symptoms of anaemia felt during pregnancy and lactation and

also between trimesters and consumption of iron rich foods by nurturing women. No significant association was found between rural and urban status among nurturing women and their knowledge of causes of anaemiaas well as their knowledge of symptoms of anaemia.

Socio cultural practices studied show that women avoided certain dark coloured foods, hot and cold foods and certain other foods during pregnancy. Dark coloured foods were avoided due to the belief that they could cause black and blue discolouration on the baby, infection and sickness to the baby. Dark coloured foods are also believed to cause '*Chevappu'* or '*Mandham'* where '*Chevappu'* is believed tobe a condition where the baby turns blue and dies. Hot foods were avoided as they are believed to cause heat in the mother and the baby and lead to abortion. The reason for avoidance of cold food items was cold for mother and baby. Meat and mustard was believed to cause nausea and vomiting sensation in some women. Potatoes and paruppu (dhal) were avoided for the belief that they would cause gastric problems.

It is revealed in the present study that on the whole anaemic women were found to consume more number of meals per day than non anaemic women. This may be attributed to the reason that it is not the frequency (number of meals per day) of consumption which matters with respect to haemoglobin levels but the quality of the foods (iron rich foods) consumed by nurturing women. In the present study the iron rich vegetarian foods consumed by anaemic women and non anaemic women include ragi, jaggery, date fruit, Green Leafy Vegetables (GLV), greens, guava and palmyra jaggery and non vegetarian foods include meat and fish. Consumption of iron rich vegetarian foods was generally more than the consumption of iron rich

non vegetarian foods. In the present study iron rich vegetarian and non vegetarian foods were consumed by more number of anaemic and non anaemic nurturing women in the second and third trimesters which may be due to the tendency to increase food consumption in the second and third trimesters and iron rich vegetarian and non vegetarian foods were consumed by least number of anaemic and non anaemic nurturing women in first trimester which may be due to the tendency to consume less food during the first trimester than the other two trimesters.

Nurturing women wanted to know what foods to consume to prevent anaemia and increase lactation, so the present study suggests that the women should take healthier, nutritious and locally available, affordable foods especially those rich in iron. As the prevalence of anaemia in the present study was high and maternal anaemia is known to have adverse maternal and foetal outcomes, there is a dire need to prevent anaemia. Due to this dire need to prevent anaemia the present study suggests spreading more awareness about anaemia, its prevention and role of iron rich foods and healthy nutrition pattern and regular consumption of IFA tablets among nurturing women and that too in a rural population such as the one mentioned in the present study. Hence a detailed protocol on anaemia, its consequences, consumption of iron rich foods and health advice was designed. This protocol also suggests ways to prevent anaemia. Most importantly Anaemia Awareness Hand outs based on the findings of the present study were explained and distributed to the nurturing women at The Bethesda Hospital by the researcher herself after the study was completed. These Anaemia Awareness Hand outs were also put up on the notice board in the OPD (Out Patient Department) and maternity ward of the hospital after getting permission from the hospital authorities and in the subsequent meetings were explained by the health workers to nurturing women.

The purpose was that nurturing women would be benefitted and anaemia awareness and prevention would be promoted for the welfare of women and wellbeing of society. This would enhance the health life of the women and thereby the quality of life of the family, society and the state at large.