A Study on Assessment of Health, Cognitive Behavior and Nutritional Status of Pregnant Women

Vijayasree Bandikolla¹, V. Chinnari Harika²

¹Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Faculty of Home Science, Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women’s University), Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Department of Foods and Nutritional Sciences, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract: The objective of the present study is to evaluate the nutritional status and cognitive behavior, mental disorders of the pregnant women. For the purpose of study 40 pregnant women were selected. The age between 22-36 Years and the samples was collected from Govt. General hospital, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, India. Hemoglobin levels collected by Shahlis hemometer. Hemoglobin levels of pregnant women were below the standards. Nutrient intakes were collected by using 24 hrs recall method. The present study reveals that there were lower consumption in several macro and micro nutrients intake compared to Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) of India, which may be reflected on their nutritional status. Cognitive behavior and Psychological aspects of the pregnant women, not only those aspects but also it reflects on their health conditions.

Keywords: pregnant women, cognitive behavior, mental disorders, Health and Nutritional status.

1. Introduction

Pregnancy is the period of dynamic change for a mother requiring a lot of care. During this period the fetus is nourished directly by the mother through placenta. Since the baby totally relies upon its mother for nourishment, the pregnant woman is to be provided with an adequate and well-balanced diet (Mudambi, 1992). A woman’s normal nutritional requirement increases during pregnancy in order to meet the needs of the growing fetus and of maternal tissues associated with pregnancy. Proper dietary balance is necessary to ensure sufficient energy intake for adequate growth of fetus without drawing on mother’s own tissues to maintain her pregnancy (Mridula et al., 2003).

According to WHO, in developing countries, the prevalence of anemia among pregnant women is 56% (WHO, 1992). The prevalence of anemia in India is 60-70% (Park, 2005). In India, anemia is the 2nd most common cause of maternal deaths accounting for 19% of total maternal deaths (Govt. of India, 2002).

Possible effects of maternal psychological distress during pregnancy cyrange along a continuum from the immediate and disastrous (e.g., miscarriage) to the more subtle and long term (e.g., developmental disorders). Most existing research has focused on the effects of maternal distress on pregnancy itself. For example, there are numerous comprehensive reviews of research indicating that women who express greater distress during pregnancy give birth somewhat earlier to somewhat lighter babies than do women who are less distressed. The focus of this report is on the potential for maternal stress to generate more far-reaching effects on behavioral and cognitive development in childhood. Changes in brain structure and function of prenatally stressed animals have also been documented (Welberg & Seckl, 2001). Yet not all documented effects of prenatal stress are negative mild stress has been observed to benefit, not damage, later learning in rats (Fujiocka et al., 2001).

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out among pregnant women, sampling method was adopted for surveying the sample and 40 pregnant women were selected. The age between 22-36 Years and the list of pregnant women was collected from Govt. General Hospital, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, India. An interview schedule was used for collection of Health and psychological information. Fewer Psychological factors and cognitive behavior observed. Twenty-four hours recall method of diet survey was applied for the collection of dietary information. The intake of nutrients by the respondents was calculated by using Nutritive Value of Indian Foods (Gopalan, 1991). Recommended dietary allowances suggested by the ICMR for pregnant women were utilized to assess the nutritional status.

Data Collection: Diet survey was carried out by weighing method (Rao et al., 1986). Quantitative dietary assessment was done through actual weighing of raw food item. The average dietary intake of food per item was calculated and was compared with the RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowances) of India using the values as per ‘Nutritive Value of Indian Food’ (Gopalan et al., 2006).

Biochemical Analysis

Blood Hb levels were estimated using Shahlis hemoglobin as it was convenient to take the blood samples and percentage of Hb levels were compared with WHO standards (WHO, 1982).

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Health Complications of pregnant women (N= 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Complications</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>No of Non-respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>21(52.5)</td>
<td>19(47.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>16(40.0)</td>
<td>24(60.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>38(95.0)</td>
<td>12(30.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>29(72.5)</td>
<td>11(27.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent illness (Cold, Cough and Fever)</td>
<td>27(67.5)</td>
<td>13(32.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may be possible that taking a thiamine supplement can help to prevent the conditions which lead to memory loss. This has led experts to the conclusion that a lack of thiamine can cause memory loss, disruption in cognitive function and memory retention (Benton, 2008). If a lack of thiamine can cause memory loss, then it is important to ensure that pregnant women receive adequate amounts of thiamine to prevent this. Nutritional deficiencies also play an important role and the present study shows the behavior problems among pregnant women. Irritability, apathy and food aversions or cravings are common among pregnant women due to hormonal changes and nausea, as well as nausea severity (Wheatley, 1977). While vitamin B6 alone seems to have better results among patients with severe nausea than among patients with mild to moderate nausea (Sahakian et al., 1991). Benton claimed that people suffering from micronutrient deficiencies often display this through psychological channels such as mood (2008a).

Table 2 shows Cognitive and psychological behavior of pregnant women (N=40).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive and Psychological aspects</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>No of Non-respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mood changes</td>
<td>25 (62.5)</td>
<td>15 (37.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory loss</td>
<td>16 (40.0)</td>
<td>24 (60.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social stimulation</td>
<td>21 (52.5)</td>
<td>19 (47.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food aversions or cravings</td>
<td>19 (47.5)</td>
<td>21 (52.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>27 (67.5)</td>
<td>13 (32.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy</td>
<td>22 (55.0)</td>
<td>18 (45.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows Cognitive and psychological behavior of pregnant women. Psychological changes are common among pregnant women due to hormonal changes and nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy such as mood changes, memory loss, social stimulation, food aversions or cravings, irritability and apathy etc. Majoritity of the respondents (62.5%) had mood changes, 40.0% per cent were in memory loss. Memory loss in the sense having the habit of forgetting other behaviors social stimulation, irritability, apathy and food aversions or cravings are commonly observed among pregnant women. The present study shows the behavior problems among pregnant women. Nutrient deficiencies also play an important role and the present study in accordance with the studies. The thiamine deficiency disease known as Beri Beri has long been associated with memory loss. This has led experts to the conclusion that long-term thiamine deficiency can cause a disruption in cognitive function and memory retention (Benton, 2008). If a lack of thiamine can cause memory loss, it may be possible that taking a thiamine supplement can help to prevent the conditions which lead to memory loss.

Another mineral that is essential, yet has only a small time in which to make a difference is choline. Choline is necessary during the stage in which the fetus’ mind is being formed (Rosales et al., 2009). Infants who were studied by Lozoff et al in Costa Rica were followed up at the age of 5 years. Children who had been anemic in infancy (haemoglobin <10 g/100 ml) had lower developmental scores at age 5 than those who had not been anemic, regardless of treatment group and despite similar mean current haemoglobin values in the two groups.

Oxidative processes have been suggested to contribute to the development of AD. Therefore, antioxidants that counteract the detrimental effects of oxidative stress may reduce the risk. It is unknown whether dietary intake of vitamin E and other antioxidant nutrients prevents the development of AD. Prospective and longitudinal studies show different results. The strongest evidence for an association with cognition has been reported for vitamins C and E. In June 2002 Engelhart et al. (2002) presented new results from the Rotterdam study (see above), in which high intakes of vitamins C and E were associated with a lower risk of AD. The number of studies that argue for a protective effect of antioxidants on cognitive performance is increasing, but more prospective studies are needed.

While most micronutrient deficiencies are likely to be resolved with improvements in economic output comes by way of rising caloric intake, decacyency in utero for four nutrients in particular (B6, B9, B12 and iodine) has been biologically linked to irreversible and continuous damage to cognitive development throughout an individual’s lifetime (Bottiglieri et al., 1995, Guilarte 1993, Fioravantiet al., 1997, Hankey 1999; Alpert and Fava, 1997; Schneede 1994; Cao et al., 1994; Hetzel and Mano, 1989; Pharoah and Connolly, 1987). Because of these persistent changes on learning over the lifespan, the proposed research project will examine these nutrients, B6, B9 and B12, on subsequent cognitive development.

Table 3 shows the hemoglobin levels of pregnant women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Hemoglobin levels</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hb &lt; 10 mg/dl</td>
<td>22 (55.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Hb &gt;10 mg/dl</td>
<td>18 (45.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the hemoglobin levels of pregnant women. Most of the pregnant women are anemic and their hemoglobin levels are < 10 mg/dl. The present study intends that 55.0 per cent of pregnant women hemoglobin levels were considered < 10 mg/dl and 45.0 per cent of pregnant women hemoglobin levels were considered as >10 mg/dl.

There is increasing evidence that low iron status adversely influences physiological functions not only due to reduced hemoglobin synthesis but also because of decreased activity of iron containing enzymes in the brain (Benton, 2008).
The effects of some diseases can be reduced by consuming nutrient dense foods, such as meat. Meat is an important part of most healthy diets because it contains many essential amino acids and vitamins (Tapsell, 2007). These nutrients are essential to the function of the body and the immune system. Carotenoids are small nutrients which can convert to vitamin A under the proper circumstances. However, on their own they serve as a powerful antioxidant and boost the immune system (Carpenter & Finley, 2005).

Micronutrients such as iron are not the only nutritional components which have an effect on the mood and behavior of children. Researchers Liu and Raine concluded that both micronutrients and macronutrients have a noticeable effect on childhood behavior (Benton, 2008b).

Vitamin A is essential in cell differentiation (Thompson & Manore, 2006). Differentiation is the process through which cells split and begin to perform different functions. Without the proper amount of vitamin A cells could not possibly perform their tasks properly. The B vitamins, such as B12 and B6, are very important vitamins because they help keep the digestive system working properly. These nutrients are key components of the metabolic processes (Blake, 2008).

A deficiency of folate during the stages of early pregnancy can be linked to the increased risk of giving birth to a child with physical defects (Carpenter & Finley, 2005). Before a child is born the nutrients which it receives come through its mother, and the window of opportunity for nutritional impact may be small. Folic acid is only exceedingly important until the spinal cord closes. The fetus needs this nutrient in order to properly develop its spinal cord. A lack of proper nutrition for the expectant mother can have devastating, lifelong consequences for her unborn child.

IPF is also affected by the intake of green and yellow vegetables. A study of eating habits for those with IPF showed a marked improvement in those who had a high intake of green and yellow vegetables (Miyake et al., 2004). These vegetables are rich in nutrients such as iron that the body needs to fight off diseases. A diet which includes these foods will have a marked effect on diseases that build on lack of nutrition. It has been found that eating vegetables and other plant foods can have a significant effect on disease prevention because of the fiber and other nutrients which they contain (Lea et al., 2006). The present study results showed that the nutrient intakes of pregnant women were lower than the standards and other complications such as heath, cognitive behavior and mental disorders were commonly observed among pregnant women and hemoglobin levels were also lower than the standards.

### 4. Conclusion

Nutritional problems have serious public health significance impacting psychological, physical, Cognitive behavior and psychological disorders of pregnant women. Iron deficiency is by far the commonest nutritional cause of anemia. It may be associated with folic deficiency, especially during pregnancy. Pregnant women form a large high-risk group requiring special care should be taken. For supplementary nutrition, iron and folic acid tablets should be supplied to the pregnant women. For the maintenance of healthy and active life, access to safe and nutritious food is essential. Importance and special care should be given. Because nutrition is very important during pregnancy in order to maintain health, cognitive and psychological behavior of pregnant women. Adequate nutrition among pregnant women helps to give birth to healthy baby.

### 5. Acknowledgement

The author expresses her thanks to H.O.D, Dept of foods and nutritional sciences, Acharya Nagarjuna University for providing continuous help during research work.

### References


