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Awareness and Practice of Folic Acid Intake for Neural Tube Defect Prevention at Antenatal Clinic in Rajamalwatta, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) are common cause of morbidity and mortality among infants and neonates. Squeal of severe NTDs lead to lifelong physical, social, emotional and financial difficulties. Annually worldwide an estimated 300,000 or more babies are born with NTDs. Fortunately; a large number of NTDs are preventable. Several studies have shown that periconceptional use of Folic Acid (FA) has an effective role in the prevention of NTDs. The objective of our study was to assess awareness and practice of FA intake for prevention of NTDs. This cross-sectional study was done on pregnant women who seeking for antenatal care at Rajamalwatta antenatal clinic, Mattakuliya from 2012 August to 2013 December. A well validated questionnaire was administered to the subjects. Out of 261 women served; 81.22% heard about FA, but only 16.98% knew that FA prevent the NTDs. Knowledge was significantly associated with higher socio-economic status and higher education ($p < 0.005$). A higher education level was correlated with the knowledge of FA benefits and correct time of FA in intake. Out of 44.81% of the total women took folic acid during pregnancy but 17.92% aware about folic acid intake during preconceptional is important. The most information sources on folate were healthcare workers (76.41%) and media is second most sources (15.09%). In conclusion, knowledge and practice about the benefits of this vitamin is inadequate, so healthcare plan to increase the knowledge and practice of folic acid by women is required.

Keywords: Folic acids, Neural tube defects, Preconception

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