

**Why anaemia is a major antenatal problem in Jaffna? A study to assess the field midwives knowledge on the issue.**

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**Background:** Anaemia in pregnant mothers is higher (25.2%) in Jaffna district than the National levels (20%). Various factors contribute to this high incidence.

**Study Objectives:** To identify the modifiable risk factors for the prevalence of higher incidence of anaemia in Jaffna district.

**Methods:** Midwives representing all the MOH areas in Jaffna district participated in this study. Self-administered closed audit proforma was used to collect the data. The knowledge on anaemia in pregnancy, prevention of anaemia, iron sources and side effects of iron tablets and ante partum & postpartum care of anaemic mother were assessed. Standard marking scheme was used to assess the data.

**Results:** Sixty nine midwives participated in the study and among those 98.5% (68/69) of midwives correctly define the anemia according to WHO definition. Importantly, only 11.5% (08/69) knew how to take the iron tablets properly. 14.5% (10/69) of midwives were able to answer the common side effects of iron tablets. 78.26 % (54/69) of midwives have adequate knowledge on iron rich food sources. The common symptoms of anemia are correctly identified by 86.9% (60 /69) of midwives. 92.7% (64/69) of the participants knows their role in handling the anemic mothers during antenatal home visits and clinics. 94.2% (65/69) of them have adequate knowledge on postpartum care and contraceptive advice in anemic mothers.

**Conclusions:** Midwives have adequate knowledge on antenatal and postnatal care of anemic mothers. But they did not have adequate knowledge on the available iron preparations and their side effects. They were not sure about the dose and timing of the iron tablets.

**Public Health Implications:** The midwives are the frontiers of the antenatal care in Sri Lanka. Their knowledge on nutrition and other aspect of antenatal care should be updated on a regular basis with the available regional and national resources. Upgrading their knowledge, we can improve the antenatal care and minimize the antenatal problems such as maternal anaemia.