



Baseline Study on the Nutritional Status of Rural Population in Ambagahakanda Village Adjacent to the Sinharaja Forest

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Abstract

Consumption of a balanced-nutritious diet is essential in ensuring public health. It is important to assess the baseline nutritional status of the population before development and implementation of an effective intervention programmes to improve the nutritional status. Therefore, this study was conducted in the *Ambagahakanda* village of the *Rathnapura* district of Sri Lanka to assess the baseline nutritional status of rural people and to evaluate the nutritional knowledge, attitudes and practices of the rural community. The sample consisted of 148 individuals and nutrient intake (24 h diet recall), anthropometric measurements (height, weight and MUAC) and demographic information (Age, sex, employment etc.) were collected using a structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The majority of subjects belong to the middle-class socio-economic category and both males and females showed normal Body Mass Index (BMI) with a mean BMI value of 23.74. There was a significant correlation between BMI and Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) in both males ($P < 0.001$, $r = 0.68$) and females ($P < 0.001$, $r = 0.47$). The results of the 24 h diet recalls indicated that the mean daily intake of energy by men and women were 2545 kcal and 1988 kcal, respectively. The energy intake of both males and females did not show any significant difference ($P > 0.05$) compared to the standard values (2500 kcal for men, 2000 kcal for women) recommended by the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka. However, the protein intake of both males (68g) and females (58g) showed significantly lower ($P < 0.05$) values than the recommended values. It can be concluded that the rural diet lacks protein although it provides adequate energy to maintain the normal BMI. Therefore, proper intervention programmes need to be implemented with a view to enhancing the nutritional knowledge and attitudes to combat possible protein malnutritional disorders in the future.

Keywords: *Anthropometric data, Mid upper arm circumference, Body Mass Index, Diet recall*

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