

Knowledge and attitudes on fetal anomalies among pregnant women attending the antenatal clinics of Teaching Hospital, Mahamodara

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Introduction

Annually around three million children die due to congenital anomalies and it is a leading factor for infant morbidity. In Sri Lanka a major cause for neonatal death is fetal anomalies. The objectives were to assess the knowledge and attitudes of pregnant women regarding pre conception care, causes and risk factors and prevention of fetal anomalies.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in university antenatal clinic (5 clinics) of Teaching Hospital, Mahamodara (THM). Non probability convenience sampling method was used to select the sample. An interviewer-administered, pretested questionnaire was used. The knowledge domain of the questionnaire was categorized as; poor (00–39.9%), average (40–59.9%) and good (60–100%). Ten questions were used to assess the attitude domain. It was evaluated by calculating the percentages of positive and negative responses.

Results

Hundred and fifty pregnant women participated in this study. Majority (70%) was below 30 years of age, and 53.3% had educated up to G.C.E. O/L. Majority (53.3%) was multigravida and 62% were planned pregnancies. Higher proportion of the participants; 61%, 56.7% and 82% had good knowledge on the risk factors, pre conception care and preventive measures of birth defects respectively. Considerable proportion (26.7%) had poor knowledge regarding birth defects. Majority (95.3%) of the participants was interested to know more information on birth defects, and 72% of them believed that birth defects were due to evil spirits. Although 52% of women did not want to terminate their pregnancy if they had a fetus with anomalies, 80.7% of them said that the termination of pregnancy with birth defects should be legalized. The educational level, parity and planning of current pregnancy were significantly correlated ($P < 0.05$) with their knowledge on pre conception care, preventive actions, risk factors and overall knowledge on birth defects. Seventy-six percent received information on birth defects by Public Health Midwife.

Conclusions

Pregnant women attending antenatal clinics at THM had good knowledge on birth defects. The knowledge is positively correlated with the level of education, parity and planning of current pregnancy.