

ANAEMIA AMONG FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES RESIDING IN THE HOSTELS OF UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA

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Anaemia is a major public health problem that has affected about 25% of the world's population. Anaemia is considered as a moderate public health problem in Sri Lanka. An analytical cross-sectional study was performed on 313 female undergraduates residing in the hostels of University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka during the year 2011. The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence and contributing factors to anaemia among the above mentioned study population. Haemoglobin concentration was assayed using cyanomethaemoglobin method. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used to retrieve information regarding dietary habits and personal factors of the participants. Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS version 15. Descriptive statistical methods, Chi-square test and independent sample t-test were used to analyze the data. Of the 302 females for whom complete data were available, 17.5% (n=53) had mild anaemia (Hemoglobin concentration between 10.0 – 10.9 g/dl) and 7.9% (n= 24) had moderate anaemia (Hemoglobin concentration between 8.0 – 9.9 g/dl). Severely anaemic individuals (Hemoglobin concentration below 7.9 g/dl) were not observed during the study. Participants' awareness on anaemia showed a statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) association with the faculty in which they are studying. Yet the proportion of anaemia in the study group did not show a statistically significant association ($p > 0.05$) with the faculty they are studying. Participants' dietary habits and personal factors were also considered in the study, but those were not significantly associated with the prevalence of anaemia (whether a participant is a vegetarian or not ($p=0.525$), Drinking tea within one hour of a meal ($p=0.775$), Frequency of consumption of red meat, fish & eggs ($p=0.499$), Anthelmintic treatment within past year ($p=0.792$), Menorrhagia ($p=0.560$). Anaemia in the study population is below the average for Sri Lankan data. Diet and selected medical conditions were not a causative factor for anaemia in this population.