

NON MEDICAL RISK FACTORS OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT**P. V. R. KUMARASIRI***Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya*

Many research works have been conducted to identify the possible obstetric and medical risk factors of low birth weight. Few studies have been done to identify the possible non medical risk factors. Having understood the importance and the gravity of the problem, this study was planned to identify the demographic, socioeconomic and environmental factors associated with the birth weight.

This was a follow up study to find out the association between the birth weights and the demographic, socio-economic and environmental factors. Demographic variables were the age of the father and mother, number of children in the family, ethnicity and the religion of the father, height of the father and mother in cent meters. The socio-economic data were occupation, education of the parents, monthly income of the family. The environmental data were the source of water supply and the type of toilet facilities available, ventilation of the bedroom, per person cubic area of the bedroom, condition of the roof, walls, and floor of the house. In addition to this information, smoking habits of the father and the other family members, and the alcohol consumption of father was collected.

Mothers residing in the Hindagala Community Project Area, who have delivered babies from 1st of September 1997 to 30th of August 1998, were recruited in this study. Mothers who had known obstetric and medical causes of low birth weight and pre term babies were excluded from the study. There were 301 mothers qualified for the enrolment in the study.

Of the 310 births occurred in the area 71 had less than 2500 grams, calculated 23.6%. Among the 18 variables (demographic, socio-economic and environmental) studied, the multiple regression model identified only three statistically significant variables. They are the father's occupation, mother's education and the number of children at home. This indicate the babies born to the families where the father is a manual or skilled labourers are more prone to get low birth weight babies compared to the other occupations. On the other hand the birth weight increases with the mother's educational levels. The results also revealed that the birth weight of the second baby of the family was more than the first baby.