

11TH WORLD PEDIATRIC CONGRESS

AUGUST 16-17, 2018 SINGAPORE

The prevalence of under nutrition and associated factors among children aged one to five years in a rural area in Sri Lanka

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Introduction & Aim: High prevalence of child under nutrition is a well-known issue in rural areas. The objective of this study is to describe the prevalence and associated factors among children aged 1-5 years in Siyambalanduwa Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area in Moneragala district.

Method: A community based cross-sectional study was conducted among 421 child-mother pairs in Siyambalanduwa MOH area using two stage cluster sampling method with a cluster size of 36. Children of mothers who cannot communicate in Sinhala were excluded. Data were collected by pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire and conducting anthropometric measurements according to WHO guidelines. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS 20. The chi-square test was used and $P < 0.05$ was considered for statistically significant.

Result: Overall 41% of children aged 1-5 years were under nourished in Siyambalanduwa MOH area. Among the study subjects 24% were underweight, 25.7% were stunted, 16.4% were wasted, 9.2% were both underweight and stunted, 6.8% were both, underweight and wasted, 0.5% were both, stunted and wasted and 9.9% were underweight and stunted and wasted. Only the low total monthly income ($P < 0.001$) and low birth weight ($P < 0.001$) were significantly associated with child under nutrition. Among parents or caregivers 18.6% had good knowledge, 35.6% had favorable attitudes and 12.6% had good practices related to child nutrition. None of the above three factors were significantly associated with child under nutrition.

Conclusion: Prevalence of under nutrition among children aged 1-5 years is high and urgent efforts to reduce under nutrition should be a priority. Future studies should focus on assessing how to reduce the burden with low cost appropriate interventions.

Biography

A M U P Kumari has graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka and obtained MSc in Community Medicine from Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka and currently serves as a MD trainee attached to PGIM. She is a member of Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC). She is presently working at the Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka and acts as the focal point for leishmaniasis, chickenpox and mumps surveillance. She has worked as a Medical Officer of Health in Siyambalamduwa (A rural area in Monaragala district, Sri Lanka) for more than 2 years since 2013 and had been involved in child welfare activities, maternal health, school health and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases at grass root level. She has provided expert services to Siyambalanduwa in the field of maternal and child health.

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