

# **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WEIGHT GAIN, BIRTHWEIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NUTRITION AMONG PREGNANT MOTHERS ATTENDING A TEACHING HOSPITAL IN SRI LANKA**

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This study was designed to explore the association of maternal weight gain to the level of knowledge about nutrition. The association of maternal weight gain to the birth weight of the child was also examined.

Healthy mothers (n=201) were recruited from the antenatal wards of CSTH, Sri Lanka for the study over a period of three months. Those who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were given a self-administrated questionnaire and their weight was measured. After the delivery, the birth weight of infants was taken.

The mean weight gain during the course of the pregnancy was 12.78 ( $\pm 4.09$ ) kg. The mean birth weight of infants among the study participants was 2963.18 ( $\pm 421.41$  g).

More than 70% of participants were found to have satisfactory or good knowledge of nutrition. Most pregnant women avoided certain foods during pregnancy. Most of them considered pineapple (35.8%), prawns (11.4%), kehelmuwa (plantain flower) (9.0%), and unripe papaya (7.0%) as not good to eat during pregnancy. Their myths regarding avoiding these foods included that they would lead to miscarriage (14.9%), not good for the foetus (10.0%), and can give rise to antepartum bleeding (0.5%). Certain foods were avoided by 18.4% of participants without a specific reason. The relationship between weight gain and the birth weight of the infant was statistically significant ( $p=0.015$ ).

In conclusion this study highlights the impact of proper knowledge on nutrition during pregnancy. Subjects avoid certain foods during pregnancy, because of the unnecessary fears, myths and cultural believes which should be corrected at primary care level. The importance of adequate weight gain during pregnancy to ensure a good pregnancy outcome and a healthy infant at birth was also reemphasized by the findings of this study.