

# EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION, KNOWLEDGE AND BARRIERS IN ATTENDING ANTENATAL EDUCATION AMONG MALE PARTNERS: FINDINGS FROM A MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH AREA IN ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT

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In order to improve maternal wellbeing, since 2014 the circulars issued by FHB announced that every couple should participate to three antenatal classes. However, the participation of male partners seems very low. Our aim was to explore the extent of participation, knowledge and barriers in attending antenatal sessions among male partners. A cross sectional descriptive study was done among 213 male partners in Ippollagama Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area in Anuradhapura district. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data and data were analyzed using SPSS software package. Majority of participants were between 30 to 39 years (53.5%), Sinhalese (93.9 %) and Buddhists and were educated up to Ordinary level (42.3%). Most were married between 1-5 years (44%) and were employed in skill and agriculture (56%). Majority of participants did not participate in antenatal sessions (67.1%). Less than half (44%) had good knowledge on antenatal care and mean knowledge score was  $65.66 \pm 7.742SD$ . Knowledge on immunization and supplements ( $> 70\%$ ), were aware about the importance of oral hygiene in the pregnancy period (97%) and were knowledgeable about risk conditions and regarding breast feeding (69%). However most were unaware about worm treatment during pregnancy (68%). Level of knowledge was not significant with any of selected socio demographic characteristics ( $p > 0.05$ ). Majority stated that the main barrier in participating antenatal classes was their responsibility towards employer and inability to take leave. Extent of participation of male partners is relatively low (32.9%). Only 44% had good knowledge on antenatal care and child birth. Male partners should be given at least half day leave to participate antenatal sessions with their wives.

**Keywords:** Male partners, Extent of participation, Antenatal education, knowledge, Barriers