

Introduction:

Birth weight is a reflection of Maternal Health and as such is an indicator of the health status of a population. The lower the birth weight, the greater is the chance of death. Birth weight is the most sensitive and reliable indicator of the risk to the survival of baby and its healthy growth and development.

According to WHO, a Low birth weight (LBW) baby is one with a birth weight of less than 2500 gm. LBW is one of the major cause for high Infant Mortality rate. Therefore, the best way to reduce Infant Mortality rate would be to prevent as many LBW births as possible (UNICEF, 1991).

Infants weighing less than 2500 gm at birth are nearly 40 times more likely to die during their first four weeks of life than normal birth weight infants. LBW is associated with increased incidence of growth & developmental disorders, mental retardation and disorders of Nervous system.

LBW episode is a Multifactorial Phenomenon. Krammer (1987) & Behrman (1985) classified the risk factors of LBW into seven categories namely genetic & constitutional risk factors, Demographic risk factors, Nutritional risk factors, Medical & Obstetric risk factors. The presence of these risk factors in an individual woman

indicates her increased chance of bearing a LBW Infant.

The incidence of LBW can be reduced by provision of high quality prenatal care and broad public information activities aimed at pregnant women and their families.

ternity Hospital, Nayapool, Hyderabad which is the largest maternity hospital in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The Sample consisted of 100 normal Primi mothers who have given birth to normal baby by vaginal delivery and are admitted in post

natal wards of the Hospital. Purposive sampling technique was used for selection of the

A STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE OF MOTHER'S ABOUT RISK FACTORS OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT

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It is better to prevent the birth of a LBW baby than to treat the same later. Majority of term LBW births can be prevented by providing health education to mother's about risk factors of LBW & prevention of LBW.

Objectives of the study:

1. To assess the knowledge of mothers about risk factors of low birth weight babies.
2. To analyse the relationship between mother's knowledge and selected demographic variables.
3. To identify the relationship between mother's knowledge and birth weight of new born babies.

Methodology:

Research approach selected for

the study was the descriptive approach of Survey Method. The Study was conducted in postnatal wards of Govt. Ma-

sample.

A structured interview Schedule in three Parts was prepared to assess the knowledge of mothers. The first part of tool deals with demographic data, second part of the tool consists of 46 questions which were divided into six areas namely knowledge of normal newborn birth weight & LBW baby, genetic and constitutional risk factors, demographic risk factors, nutritional risk factors, psychosocial & health care risk factors, medical and obstetric risk factors of LBW. The Third part of the tool consists of information about birth weight of newborn babies to enable the investigator identify the relation-

Knowledge Scores of Mothers

Level of Knowledge	Score Range	Percentage
Low knowledge	15-24	29
Medium Knowledge	25-30	39
High knowledge	31-44	32
Total		100
Mean	28.38	SD =6.12

ship between mother's knowledge and birth weight of their babies.

Data collection was →

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done through personal contact and interview with 100 normal Primi post natal mothers with a normal live born baby in post natal ward of Govt. Maternity Hospital Nayapool, Hyderabad in the Month of May, 1996.

Findings of the Study:

Mother's knowledge about risk factors of LBW was analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics. Categorization of knowledge scores was done in order to classify the subjects in to high, medium, low knowledge groups on the basis of quartile values. The mean knowledge score of mothers was 28 and S. D. 6.12.

The study revealed that 39% of the mothers had medium level knowledge and 32% had high level knowledge and 29% of mothers had low level knowledge about risk factors of LBW.

Area wise analysis of mother's knowledge about risk factors of LBW revealed that majority of the mothers had low-level knowledge about normal birth weight of newborn babies, birth weight of a LBW baby, demographic, genetic, constitutional medical & obstetric risk factors.

Relationship between Mother's knowledge and demographic variables was computed by using chi-square tests. The findings showed that there was significant relationship between mother's knowledge & demographic variables like age, place of living, education, income, occupation etc.

The relationship between mother's knowledge and birth weight of new born babies was compared by using chi-square test. The obtained chi-square value 13.75 is Significant at .05 percent level of probability

showing that there is a strong association between birth weight of babies and mothers knowledge about risk factors of LBW.

The study also revealed that majority (58%) of newborn babies birth weight was less than 2500 gms and significant relationship existed between mother's knowledge and birth weight of their newborn babies. The hypothesis formulated by the investigator was supported by the findings of the study stating that mothers with high level knowledge about risk factors of LBW are more likely to give birth to normal or above normal birth weight babies than mothers with low level knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

One hundred mothers' knowledge about risk factors of LBW was assessed in the present study. The findings revealed that majority of the mothers were very young, illiterate and belonged to low socio-economic status, had medium level knowledge. Significant relationship existed between mothers knowledge and birth weight of their new born babies.

An information Module about prevention of some of the modifiable risk factors of LBW was prepared by the investigator and health education was given to mothers.

A similar study can be conducted with a larger sample in different settings by including the practices of mothers during pregnancy to present score of the modifiable risk factors of LBW to strengthen the findings of the study.

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