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Anemia associated with asymptomatic malaria among pregnant women in rural surroundings of Arbaminch town, South Ethiopia

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Statement of the Problem: Anemia during pregnancy is a well-known medical condition most of the time under-recognized as it is overshadowed by the normal physiological condition during pregnancy. Maternal anemia consequently increases the incidence of maternal mortality and is associated with increased fetal and infant mortality, prematurity and low birth weight. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence and predictors of anemia among pregnant women residing in the rural surroundings of Arbaminch Town, south Ethiopia.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A cross- sectional community based study was conducted between April and June 2013. A structured questionnaire was used to collect socio- economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the pregnant women. Hematocrit level was determined to classify the pregnant women as anemic and non-anemic. Diagnosis of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia was done by Giemsa stained blood smear microscopy.

Findings: A total of 341 pregnant women, median age of 25 years (Inter-quartile range: 23-29), participated in the present study. Prevalence of anemia was 34.6% (118/341) with a mean hematocrit level of 35.2% (95% CI: 34.6%–35.8%) with SD of ±5.5%. The prevalence of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia was 9.1% (31/341). The odds of being anemic were 15.72 times [AOR: 15.72, 95% CI (3.97, 62.22), P-value ≤0.001] more likely to occur in parasitemic individuals relative to the non parasitemic pregnant women.

Conclusion & Significance: The significant association between asymptomatic malaria and anemia among pregnant women warrant the antenatal care with a package of screening for malaria and anemia followed by prompt management to curb the inevitable consequences on mother and her fetus.

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