ABSTRACT

Anaemia in pregnancy is a common problem in the developing countries. It is a major cause of morbidity and mortality, with 20% of maternal deaths in Africa being attributable to this problem.

This study was carried out to determine the prevalence and the determinants of anaemia among pregnant women who presented to book for antenatal care at the Fillin Ball PHC in Jos North LGA of Plateau State. The women were enrolled during their booking clinic. Most of them presented after the first trimester of their index pregnancy, with more women booking during the third trimester than in the first. During the booking clinic, socio-demographic data, past medical history and history of the index pregnancy were collected using a questionnaire. Samples of venous blood, urine and stool were collected from the women. The venous blood was tested for RBC indices, serum ferritin, and the presence of malaria parasite. Urine sample was tested for urinary tract infection and the stool sample was tested for intestinal parasites. The women also received a routine physical examination and findings were recorded.

One hundred and nineteen (46.7%) of the subjects were found to be anaemic with most (59.7%) having mild anaemia. The prevalence of iron deficiency was very high (65.1%) in the study subjects. There was a high prevalence of malaria (40.4%) among the study subjects and 41.2% of them had a UTI based on urine culture findings. The prevalence of HIV infection and intestinal parasitic infections were low, 2.0% and 9.0% respectively. All the infections - malaria, UTI, HIV infection and intestinal helminths were observed to be not significantly associated with anaemia in pregnancy. There was no significant association between anaemia and level of education or socio-economic class. However, anaemia was found to be significantly associated with parity, birth interval, trimester of pregnancy at booking and iron deficiency. The strongest determinant of anaemia in pregnancy in the study subjects was iron deficiency.

Educating women on the benefits of early commencement of antenatal care will help reduce the prevalence and severity of anaemia in pregnancy. Education should include family planning, dietary advice, prevention of infections and improved personal and environmental hygiene.