

## Prevalence of Minor Ailments of Pregnancy and related Knowledge among Antenatal Mothers

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### Abstract

Pregnancy is a period where the mother tends to take care of herself so as to prepare herself for safe delivery. Many pregnant women experience discomforts of pregnancy that are not serious but detract from the woman's feeling of comfort and well-being. The purpose of this study was to identify the prevalence of minor ailments of pregnancy and to assess the knowledge regarding selected minor ailments among antenatal mothers. *Methods:* The present study used a descriptive survey design. Sixty antenatal mothers attending Obstetrics and Gynecology OPD, AIMS, Kochi were selected using quota sampling technique including 30 primigravida and 30 multigravida mothers. Demographic variables and knowledge regarding minor ailments of pregnancy were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The prevalence of minor ailments of pregnancy was identified by a checklist. Data analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics like frequency, percentage and t-test. *Results:* The most common minor ailments were frequency of micturition(80%), nausea and vomiting (80%), fatigue(80%), back pain(70%) and leg cramps(55%). Knowledge regarding minor ailments of pregnancy was good in 54%, average in 41% and poor in 5%. There was no significant difference between knowledge and prevalence of minor ailments between primi and multi gravida. *Conclusion:* The result of the study suggest that health education should be provided to all the antenatal mothers regarding minor ailments of pregnancy and its management.

**Keywords:** Prevalence; Knowledge; Minor Ailments of Pregnancy; Antenatal Mothers.

### Introduction

Pregnancy should be a joyful, exiting time. But this joy is sometimes reduced by many discomforts that are associated with bringing a new life into the world. These discomforts are the minor discomforts of pregnancy or ailments that are affecting the daily activities of the pregnant women. Becoming a mother

is one of the most exciting times in a woman's life. Pregnancy is a crucial period where the mother tends to take care of herself so as to prepare herself for safe delivery [1]. During the course of pregnancy period many changes occur in a woman's body as a result of hormonal influences and adaptation to the gestational process. These adaptations protect the woman's normal physiologic functioning, meet the metabolic demands that pregnancy imposes on her

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body, and provide a nurturing environment for fetal development and growth [1].

Although most women are pleased to be pregnant, the symptoms of early pregnancy tend to cause discomfort to a woman rather than provide evidence that she is carrying a child [3]. Many women experience discomforts of pregnancy that are not serious but reduces the woman's feeling of comfort and wellbeing. They experience a variety of physiological and psychological symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, frequency of micturition, breathing difficulty, ankle edema, hemorrhoids, backache, heartburn, varicose vein, constipation, leg cramps, and ptyalism. These are termed as minor ailments or discomforts of pregnancy. The minor ailments of pregnancy begin soon after fertilization and continue throughout gestation. These changes occur in response to physiological changes during pregnancy. These changes may be unpleasant as well as worrying but they are rarely a cause for alarm as most of these changes are usually normal [4]. As such a woman may become frustrated, expecting pregnancy to be a time of glowing good health. Providing empathetic and sound advice about measure to relieve these discomforts helps promote overall health and wellbeing [3].

Minor ailments are common during pregnancy and is reported by 50% - 80% of pregnant women.<sup>6</sup> Pregnancy is not a disease but it is true to say that a pregnant woman does not feel as normal as when not pregnant: there are some pregnancy related complaints which, when excessive need to be treated most of the common minor ailments can be treated. Nausea occurs in 80-85% of all pregnancies during the first trimester, with vomiting an associated complaint in approximately 50% of women. 20% of pregnant women will have no symptoms at all. The symptoms commonly start five weeks after conception and end by week 15 in 60% of affected women. About 9% of affected women have symptoms persist beyond week 18 of pregnancy. Approximately 80% of pregnant women having back pain. Heartburn is one of the most common gastrointestinal symptoms in pregnant women, with an incidence in pregnancy of 17% to 45% [4].

A study done to assess the knowledge on minor ailments during pregnancy and home remedies among 30 pregnant mothers at Chennai with a self report questionnaire shown that 13 (43%) have inadequate, 13 (43%) have moderate and 4 (14%) have adequate knowledge on minor ailments and home remedies for minor ailments of pregnancy<sup>7</sup>, 13 (43%) have inadequate, 12 (40%) have moderate and 5 (17%) have adequate knowledge. Another study conducted

in 2005, to assess the knowledge and attitude of primigravida mothers regarding minor disorders of pregnancy in Bangalore on seventy five primigravida mothers. The mean knowledge score obtained by the primigravida mothers were 34 and median score was 48 with standard deviation of 16.43 and the knowledge score were in the range of 63 to 30. The overall attitude of primigravida mothers showed that 28% of mothers had favorable attitude towards minor disorders of pregnancy, 47% of mothers had neutral attitude and 25% of mothers had unfavorable attitude towards minor disorders of pregnancy [7]. Most women are healthy during pregnancy and do not have serious health concerns. Mother may have minor physical symptoms throughout pregnancy that are considered normal pregnancy changes. It is important for mother to be aware of symptoms. Many minor problems of pregnancy can be managed at home. Home remedial measures are usually all that is needed to relieve all minor ailments of pregnancy [5].

A study was conducted on the frequency of nausea and vomiting during pregnancy among 160 women's and reported that 74% had nausea lasting for 34.6 days. 80 % reported nausea lasting for all day only 50% of women were relieved by 14 weeks gestation. In 90 % of women nausea and vomiting was relieved by 22 weeks [4]. A study conducted on the prevalence and pattern of back pain among 2187 women at Nigeria and result showed that 52.5% of the 1919 women had backpain in pregnancy. Among the 1008 subjects(66.4%) woman experienced back pain in lower back, (20.0 %) experienced in posterior pelvic region and (9.6 %) had pain in higher back region [6].

Minor ailments of pregnancy is an important area to focus while planning care for antenatal women. Majority of the pregnant women experiences some or the other minor ailments during pregnancy. Assessment of prevalence of minor ailments will provide baseline data for planning nursing interventions. Knowledge of antenatal mothers regarding minor ailments of pregnancy should be assessed in order to plan health education. The purpose of the present study is to identify the prevalence and awareness regarding minor ailments of pregnancy among pregnant women with a view to develop an information leaflet.

## Materials and Methods

A quantitative approach with descriptive design was used for the study. Research setting was

Obstetrics and Gynecology OPD of a selected tertiary care hospital, Kochi. Sixty antenatal mothers were selected by quota sampling technique consisting of 30 primi and 30 multigravida. The mothers with medical and gynaecological complications of pregnancy were excluded from the study.

Ethical clearance was obtained from Thesis Review Committee of Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences. Purpose of the study was explained and a written informed consent was obtained from all samples. The data collection period was from March 2013 to April 2013.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to assess the sociodemographic data and knowledge regarding minor ailments of pregnancy. The knowledge questionnaire contain 19 items. The total score is 19 and interpreted as poor(0-6), average (7-12) and good(13-19). In order to identify the prevalence of minor ailments of pregnancy a checklist was used. Content validity of the tool was supported by six experts. The reliability of the knowledge questionnaire established by test retest method was 0.8.

## Results

Results of the present study are organized under three sections; sample characteristics, prevalence of minor ailments and knowledge of antenatal mothers regarding minor ailments of pregnancy.

### Sample Characteristics

About 43.3 % of the subjects belong to the age group of 26-30 years and 33.3% belongs to the age group of 18-25 years. Distribution of antenatal mothers based on demographic characteristics is given in Table 1.

### Prevalence of Minor Ailments

The most common minor ailments during pregnancy were frequency of micturition (80%), nausea and vomiting (80%), fatigue (80%), back pain (70%) and leg cramps (55%) (Figure 1). Less common minor ailments were hemorrhoid (3.3%) and nose bleed (3.3%). Distribution of primi and multi gravida based on the prevalence of minor ailments are given in Table 2.

### Knowledge of Minor Ailments of Pregnancy

Knowledge regarding minor ailments of pregnancy was good in 54%, average in 41% and poor in 5% (Figure 2). The mean knowledge score was  $12.5 \pm 3.99$  in primi gravida and  $12.53 \pm 3.07$  in multi gravida. In order to compare the knowledge of primigravida and multigravida, independent t test was computed with the mean knowledge score of primigravida and multigravida mothers. From the t value obtained, it is evident that there is no statistically significant difference between knowledge level of primigravida and multigravida mothers (Table 3).

**Table 1:** Distribution of antenatal mothers based on demographic characteristics

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage(%)
<b>Age in years</b>		
18-25yrs	20	33.3
26-30 yrs	26	43.3
31-35 yrs	11	18.3
36-45 yrs	3	5
<b>Educational status</b>		
Primary education	5	8.3
Secondary education	24	40
Diploma	3	5
Graduate/PG	25	41.7
Professional	3	5
<b>Occupation</b>		
Working	17	28.3
Non working	43	72
<b>Living status</b>		
Spouse	35	58.3
Family	25	41.7
<b>Place of residence</b>		
Rural	39	65
Urban	21	35
<b>Source of information about health</b>		
Health worker	23	38.3
Relatives/friends	25	42
Mass media	12	20

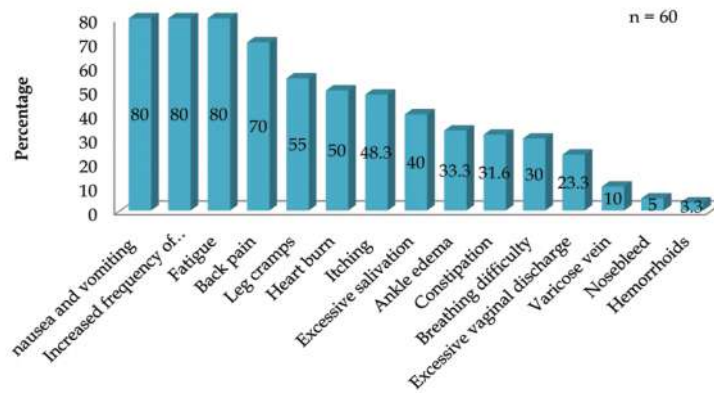
**Table 2:** Distribution of antenatal mothers based on the prevalence of minor ailments of pregnancy

Minor ailments	Primigravida (n= 30)		Multigravida (n= 30)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Nausea and vomiting	22	73.3	26	86.7
Increased frequency of micturition	25	83.3	23	76.6
Excessive salivation	10	33.3	14	46.6
Heart burn	10	33.3	20	66.6
Back pain	19	63.3	23	76.6
Breathing difficulty	6	20	12	40
Constipation	11	36.7	8	26.6
Varicose vein	1	3.3	5	16.6
Leg cramps	16	53.3	17	56.6
Ankle edema	14	46.7	6	20
Hemorrhoids	1	3.3	1	3.3
Excessive vaginal discharge	7	23.3	7	23.3
Fatigue				
Itching	25	83.3	23	76.6
Nosebleed	17	56.7	12	40
	2	6.7	1	3.3

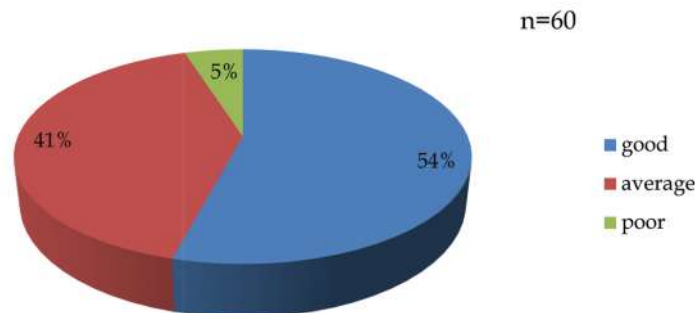
**Table 3:** Comparison of knowledge of primigravida and multigravida regarding minor ailments of pregnancy n = 60

Antenatal mothers	Mean	SD	t-value
Primigravida	12.5	3.99	0.0326
Multigravida	12.53	3.07	

(p = 0.03, α = .05%)



**Fig. 1:** Prevalence of minor ailments of pregnancy



**Fig. 2:** Knowledge of antenatal mothers regarding minor ailments of pregnancy

## Discussion

The study findings revealed that majority of antenatal mothers had nausea and vomiting (80%), increased frequency of micturition (80%), backache (70%) and only 3.3% had hemorrhoids, 5% had nose bleed and varicose vein 10%. A study conducted on frequency, intensity, and patterns of nausea and vomiting during pregnancy in Canada shows that 74% of women reported nausea lasting a mean of 34.6 days. Data based on the McGill Nausea Questionnaire indicate that the nausea experienced by pregnant women is similar in character and intensity to the nausea experienced by patients undergoing cancer chemotherapy [9].

The result also highlighted that, irrespective of the socio demographic characteristics majority of the mothers had good knowledge on minor ailments of pregnancy. Among primigravida mothers, most of the subjects (53.3%) had good knowledge and only 6.6% had poor knowledge. Among multigravida mothers, 56.6% of the subjects had good knowledge and 3.3% of the subjects had poor knowledge. A quasi experimental study conducted to assess the knowledge of antenatal mothers on minor disorders of pregnancy revealed that in pretest 90% of antenatal mothers had low knowledge and 10% had average knowledge. In post test 20% had good knowledge followed by 50% of sample with average knowledge [8]. A good knowledge score in most of the women in the present study may be attributed to the educational background and change in the setting.

Among primigravida, 83.3% had increased frequency of micturition and 73.3% had nausea and vomiting. In multigravida mothers, 86.7% of the subjects had nausea and vomiting and 76.6% had frequency of micturition, back ache and fatigue. A cross-sectional survey conducted in Taiwan revealed that the prevalence of urinary symptoms was significantly higher in nulliparous women than in multiparous women [10]. A study on pregnancy related back pain and its relation to aerobic fitness of pregnant women shows that back pain during the current pregnancy was reported by nearly 80% of the women [11]. On comparing the entire results of the present study with that of the related literature, it was found that the results are more or less consistent with the previous studies.

## Conclusion

Majority of antenatal mothers had experienced

nausea and vomiting, increased frequency of micturition and fatigue. There is no significant difference in the knowledge level of primigravida and multigravida mothers. From the findings of the study it can be concluded that health education should be provided to all the antenatal mothers regarding minor ailments of pregnancy and its management. Providing empathetic and sound advice about measure to relieve these discomforts helps promote overall health and wellbeing.

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