

## Study the Nutritional Status of Primary School Children (5-10 Years) in Gurdaspur District

Kushagra Maini\*, Purva Ranchal\*\*

Government Medical College, Patiala, India

E-mail: kushdmichealangelo@gmail.com

### Background

In India, around 46% of all children below the age of three are too small for their age, 47% are underweight and at least 16% are wasted. Many of these children are severely malnourished. Malnutrition in early childhood has serious, long-term consequences because it impedes motor, sensory, cognitive, social and emotional development. Malnourished children are less likely to perform well in school and more likely to grow into malnourished adults, at greater risk of disease and early death. Around one-third of all adult women are underweight. Inadequate care of women and girls, especially during pregnancy, results in low birth weight babies. Nearly 30% of all newborns have a low birth weight, making them vulnerable to further malnutrition and disease.

### Aims & Objectives

To study the nutritional status of primary school children and to estimate the prevalence of malnutrition and associated social demographic factors.

### Material & Methods

Community based study was done in Batala City (Block 1), Distt Gurdaspur of Punjab in the months of April to June among 275 (133 males and 142 females) primary school going children aged 5 to 10 years. Socio demographic information and anthropometric measurements were obtained by using standard techniques after taking the consent of the school head. Height and weight of each child was compared with WHO child growth standard 2006 reference data for that

particular age and sex to get W/A and H/A indices and below 2SD of the reference median on any of these indices were considered as underweight and stunted respectively.

### Results

Prevalence of underweight and stunting was 45.09% (124 children) and 11.27% (31 children) respectively. Out of the 45.09% of children suffering from malnutrition, 31.27% (86 children) were of Grade 1, 10.90% (30 children) were of Grade 2 and 2.90% (8 children) were of Grade 3. According to sex 18.54% (51 children) were males and 26.54% (73 children) were females. Out of 11.27% stunted children 12.12% (16 children) were males and 10.56% (15 children) were females.

### Conclusions

Malnutrition in children is not affected by food intake alone; it is also influenced by access to health services, quality of care for the child and pregnant mother as well as good hygiene practices. Girls are more at risk of malnutrition than boys because of their lower social status. The findings suggest that addressing the problem means addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition such as poverty, food and security, poor education and gender inequity. A right balance of adequate nutritional diet and affordable food industry spear headed by public and private sectors as well as community level initiatives could provide solutions to tackle this multi-causal problem. The package of interventions must be widely inter-sectoral so as to address at least majority of the causes.