AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE DETERMINANTS OF DIETARY INTAKE OF PREGNANT AND LACTATING MOTHERS IN ECD AND SELECTED NON-ECD AREAS

JOCELYN A. JUGUAN, MA. REGINA A. PEDRO, Ph.D.
and CORAZON M. CERDENA

Background: Efforts to improve maternal diets during pregnancy and lactation have not been adequately supported with empirical data on the causes or determinants of the diets of mothers during these critical periods. An understanding of the contributory factors that influence food intake deserves explicit attention in the formulation of target-specific nutrition policies and programs. Method: The food and nutrient intake of pregnant and lactating mothers and its determinants were examined using dataset of the ECD Baseline Survey conducted by the FNRI-DOST in 2000. Included in the study were 1,160 pregnant and 1,604 lactating mothers. Results: Results of the one-day 24-hour food recall show that the diets of both pregnant and lactating mothers are cereal-base and nutritionally inadequate in energy, protein, iron, vitamin A, and calcium. Mean energy intake of pregnant mothers was 1769 kcal and that of lactating mothers 1879 kcal, which are 16.0% and 14.5% short of energy requirement and not meeting their energy requirement 73.9% and 71.3%, respectively. In addition, iron and calcium were the most limiting in both diets meeting only 29.9% and 36.6% of iron requirement and 65.3% and 57.5% of calcium, respectively. Consequently, 99.0% of the pregnant and 97.7% of lactating mothers and 88.0% and 90.0% at risk to iron and calcium deficiency, respectively. Vitamin A intake is also low being 71.8% and 64.4% adequate among pregnant and lactating mothers, respectively making them 84.6% and 84.1% vulnerable to vitamin A deficiency (VAD). Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) done separately for the pregnant and lactating mothers show that amount or quantity of food consumed is the most important determinant of dietary intake over and above the others. Other determinants include food expenditure, morbidity, and participation in income-generating programs for the pregnant mothers, while length/duration of breastfeeding, food expenditure, program participation in income-generating, food production, and pre- and post-natal care, and education for lactating mothers. Conclusions/Recommendations: Considering the nature of maternal diet and importance of maternal nutrition to child’s survival and development, findings of this study support the proposed multiple nutrient supplementation of women of reproductive age, mandatory fortification of staples to improve maternal and subsequently, child’s health/nutrition. Not to be forgotten is the need to increase purchasing power of households through income-generating programs. However, household nutritional improvement should be given utmost consideration in planning these programs.

Science and Technology Project

FNRI-DOST