PREVALENCE OF POSTPARTUM ANAEMIA, RISK FACTORS AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH ‘POSTNATAL PANTANG’

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Background: Postpartum anemia is defined as a haemoglobin level of less than 12g/dl within forty-two days postnatally. Although it is thought to be a safe period, more than 60% of maternal death and morbidity including postnatal anaemia and haemorrhage occur during this period. ‘Postnatal pantang’ is a common traditional practice of food restriction among the Asian postnatal mothers.

Objective: The objectives of this study were to determine the prevalence of postpartum anaemia, its risk factors and its association with ‘postnatal pantang’.

Methodology: This was a cross-sectional study conducted at a primary health care clinic in Malaysia. All antenatal mothers who completed beyond 22 weeks period of gestation attending the clinic were included in the study. Face-to-face interviews were done to collect data on socio-demographic, socio-economic, medical, maternal and baby’s characteristics as well as ‘postnatal pantang’. Venous haemoglobin levels were used to assess anaemia antenatally and postnatally.

Results: A total of 146 mothers were included in the study. The prevalence of postpartum anaemia was 39.7%. The risk of postpartum anaemia increased if the women were anaemic antenatally and more significantly in the third trimester. It was not associated with the mothers’ age, parity, education level and socio-economic status. ‘Postnatal pantang’ was also not found to be associated with postnatal anaemia.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the high prevalence of postpartum anaemia among the mothers indicated the importance of screening anaemia at 4-6 weeks postpartum. ‘Postnatal pantang’ was not a causal factor for postpartum anaemia.

Keywords: antenatal anaemia, ‘postnatal pantang’, postpartum anaemia, prevalence, risk factors