

Iodine deficiency disorders among pregnant women in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) during pregnancy may impair the neurological development of the foetus. In 2008, a mandatory universal salt iodisation (USI) legislation was enacted in Sarawak as a strategy to control the IDD in the population. The aim of this study is to determine the iodine status among pregnant women (PW) in Sarawak after seven years of mandatory USI. **Methodology:** A total of 508 first trimester PW attending government Maternal and Child Health Clinics in all 11 divisions in Sarawak between 1st April to 15th June 2015 were recruited. Urine samples were obtained and were analysed for urinary iodine concentration (UIC) using the modification microtiter plate method. The WHO/UNICEF/ICCIDD have defined that a median UIC between 150-249 µg/L in PW indicates an adequate iodine intake. For further analyses, the 11 divisions were then combined into 3 zones, namely Central (Kapit, Mukah, Sibul, Sarikei, Betong), South (Kota Samarahan, Kuching, Sri Aman) and North (Miri, Bintulu, Limbang) Sarawak. **Results:** The median UIC of the PW in Sarawak was 105.6 µg/L, indicating iodine deficiency and the distribution of urinary iodine (UI) levels showed that a total of 330 (65.0%) PW had UIC<150µg/L. In terms of UI levels by zone, the median UIC in Central, Southern and Northern zones were 85.5µg/L, 97.4µg/L, 136.3µg/L respectively. The differences in median UIC between zones were significant. In addition, a large proportion of PW in the Central zone had UI levels <150'g/L (72.8%), followed by the Southern zone (67.2%) and Northern zone (56.1%). **Conclusions:** This study indicates inadequate iodine status among PW in Sarawak and the findings are of public health importance as majority of them appear not to be protected against IDD. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of iodine status during pregnancy in Sarawak is urgently needed.

KEY WORDS:

Iodine deficiency disorders, pregnant women, mandatory USI, Sarawak

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Is mental health deteriorating in Malaysia? Depression, stress, and locus of control in three regions

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ABSTRACT

The 2015 National Health and Morbidity Survey estimated that over 29% of the adult population of Malaysia suffers from mental distress. This represented a nearly 3-fold increase from the 10.7% estimated by the NHMS in 1996 pointing to the potential beginnings of a public health crisis. This study looked to better understand this trend by specifically assessing depressive symptoms and their correlates in a cross-section of Malaysians. Theorizing that rapid economic development and corresponding societal changes might be related to this problem, we looked at stress, perceived locus of control, and various socio-demographic variables as possible predictors of depressive symptoms in the Malaysian context. A total of 728 adults from three Malaysian states (Selangor, Penang, Terengganu) completed Beck's depression inventory as well as several other measures: 10% of respondents reported experiencing severe levels of depressive symptoms, 11% reported moderate and 15% reported mild depressive symptoms. When controlling for the influence of other variables, depressive symptoms were predictably related to higher levels of stress and lower levels of internal locus of control. Ethnic Chinese Malaysians, housewives and those engaged in professional-type occupations reported less depressive symptoms. Business owners reported more depressive symptoms. Further research should look into the roots of stress and locus of control among those living in urban areas in Malaysia. Preliminary data in this area indicate that safety fears, traffic congestion, childcare, work hours and diminishing sense of community may be contributory factors to this problem. It is argued that future policies and strategies can be designed to better balance individual mental health needs with economic growth.