Effects of parity and birth spacing on the nutritional status of mothers in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana

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Background

The nutritional needs of women increase rapidly at the onset of pregnancy by about 54% of protein, 13% of energy, and 50% of minerals and vitamins. Short birth spacing and high parity progression do not allow mothers to restore nutrients lost during pregnancy before the conception of another pregnancy.

Objective

We examined the effects of parity and birth spacing on the nutritional status of mothers in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana.

Method

This descriptive cross-sectional study recruited 321 mothers with two or more children, who were attending Child Welfare Clinic (CWC) using questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics comprising frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and binary logistic regression were adopted in analysing the data.

Findings

Mothers constituting 43.6% were malnourished (either underweight, overweight, or obese). Women with more than four children were more likely to be malnourished than para-two women (OR=1.20, 95%CI=0.57–2.54). The likelihood of being malnourished was lower respectively among women with two years (OR=0.66, 95%CI=0.24–1.81), three years (OR=0.71, 95%CI=0.25–2.02) and four and above years spacing between births (OR=0.64, 95%CI=0.21–1.89) compared with women having only one year spacing between births.

Conclusion

Birth spacing and parity affect the nutritional status of women especially those with increased parity and shorter birth spacing. There is, therefore, the need for stakeholders including the Ghana Health Service, to implement interventions that seek to address family planning needs of mothers to ensure wider birth spacing and reduced parity.