

## PREVALENCE OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT IN AMPARA GOVERNMENT TEACHING HOSPITAL

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Low birth weight (LBW) is the single most important factor determining the survival of the child. Many LBW babies become the victims of protein energy malnutrition and infection. The cause of LBW is multi factorial and it is still an important challenge for the health sector and the country. A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted for a period of 12 months continuously until the sample size of 251 was achieved, to study the prevalence of low birth weight among babies born at the Government Teaching Hospital, Ampara. The association between LBW and monthly income, maternal weight gain during pregnancy, maternal parity, body mass index (BMI), mother's level of education, mothers employment, pre-pregnancy interval, shared care by consultant, immunization against Rubella and husband's smoking habits were studied.

The study results revealed that the mean birth weight of babies born was 2850.4g and the prevalence of LBW was 16.8%. The majority (69.1%) of low birth weight was intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR) and the rest (30.9%) were premature. The total maternal weight gain during pregnancy was 8.9 kg. A significant association was found between LBW and family income ( $P=0.03$ ). 22.4% prevalence of LBW was observed in families whose monthly income is less than Rs. 6000.00. A fairly acceptable relationship was found between the birth weight and the family income. To reduce the prevalence of LBW, one could recommend to have pre-pregnancy counseling to all prospective mothers to achieve a normal BMI before pregnancy, discouraging teenage pregnancy, good nutrition and to achieve at least 9 Kg weight gain. It is also important to identify the high-risk mothers during the pregnancy to provide a comprehensive care during pregnancy.

**Key words:** Low birth weight, Body mass index

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