

**Author:** Margaret Kabahenda

**Topic:** Community health and nutrition programs

**Title:** Prevalence, risk factors, and management of anemia among pregnant women in western Uganda

**Presentation Type:** Oral

**Introduction:** Anemia is a common problem in developing countries and pregnant women are at higher risk due to expansion of maternal blood volume, the need for iron transfers to the fetus and placental structures, and need for a reserve for blood loss at parturition. Hence, anemia is associated with poor maternal and fetal birth outcomes.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey of 925 pregnant women (Mean age =  $25.3 \pm 5.9$  years) from the catchment areas of ten (10) Health Centre III facilities in western Uganda was conducted to determine the prevalence, risk factors, and management of anemia. This assessment was part of a controlled intervention trial testing the feasibility and effectiveness of supplementing pregnant women's dietary intake with a fish ration through existing health centres.

**Results:** Although participants were recruited in their second trimester (Mean gestation age =  $18 \pm 4$  weeks), a period when hemodilution is expected, only 30.9% had taken some iron-folic acid supplements since they became pregnant. About 11% women had already been diagnosed with anemia and were managing it by consuming iron-rich foods (39.6%), taking iron supplements (29.6%) and iron-folic acid supplements (14.3%). About a third (32.3%) of women were anemic at time of this survey and 0.8% were likely to be experiencing hemoconcentration. Risk of anemia was increased by the delayed initiation of antenatal visits, reliance on non-heme iron-rich foods, and the high incidence of diseases such as malaria.

**Conclusions:** Both preventive and recuperative interventions are needed to manage anemia at community and health facility levels.