

Poster Number 39

Abstract 0240_0346_000088

Nutrient intake, lifestyle and maternal health in women living in Northern Manitoba: Where are we at?

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Background:

Maternal malnutrition and poor lifestyle choices are associated with pre-term birth, low weight baby, still birth, and poor developmental outcomes. Due to higher levels of poverty and social marginalization Indigenous women are at a higher risk of malnutrition.

Objective:

Since the information on nutrition and lifestyle in Indigenous community is scarce, this study aimed to identify food intake patterns, nutrition status, and substance use of pregnant First Nations women living in Northern Manitoban reserve.

Methods:

Through the participatory community-engagement practices with community's health center, 36 pregnant women, ages 14-42 were interviewed. Using an interactive questionnaire developed on an ipad, information was obtained on participant demographics, dietary intake, substance use, and maternal health.

Results:

All women identified as First Nations, with 94% residing in the community. Preliminary results on nutrition intake revealed that micro- and macro- nutrient intake is not meeting Health Canada's and World Health Organization's recommendations. Only 7% of participating women met the recommendations for Fruits and Vegetables and Meat and Alternatives and 10% met the recommendations for Grains and Meat and Alternatives. While majority of participants met the recommendations for vitamin A, zinc, vitamin B12, vitamin C, niacin, and thiamin, only 23% met folate, 21% met iron, and 3% met DHA recommendations. Estimated 43% of participants ingested alcohol during pregnancy, four times higher than general Canadian population; 29% smoked cigarettes, twice higher than general Canadian population. Illicit drug use amongst participating mothers was 18% , with marijuana being the main one.

Conclusion:

These preliminary study outcomes display that pregnant women residing in Northern community have low intake of nutrients, important for fetal development; and have higher exposure to alcohol, smoking and illicit drug use. This information provides health-care and policy professionals with critical data for

best-practice policies and advocacy to benefit individuals, families and communities in Northern Manitoba.