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| **Title of Research Presentation** (Sentence case) Cross-Sectional Survey to Assess the Nutritional Status of Reproductive-Aged Women in Rural Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, to Inform Health Promoting Dietary and Lifestyle Interventions |
| **Background/Objectives**Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have emerged as the main causes of mortality in Sri Lanka. Largely under-researched is the contribution of increasingly high BMI rates to this burden. Results from Sri Lanka’s 2016 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) show that 45.3% of Sri Lanka’s women aged 15-49 have a BMI above 25.0. Specifically, 31.9% were found to be overweight, and 13.3% obese. For reproductive-aged women, high BMI effects are two-fold, increasing the risk of NCDs and pregnancy, postnatal and neonatal complications. Assessing the relevant risk factors for unhealthy BMIs is important for developing appropriate health promotion interventions. This research aims to identify the burden and determinants for unhealthy weight in rural communities of Anuradhapura District to inform the development of appropriate health promotion interventions.**Methods**A community based cross-sectional survey was conducted across five weighing clinics in rural Anuradhapura, using a pre-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire collected data on demographics, weight perception, eating habits and lifestyle, which were correlated with BMI using statistical analysis. Participants were recruited from a sample of mothers aged 18-49 attending child-weighing clinics across a two-week period**Results**Of the 129 participants, 20.3% had a BMI of <18.5, 57% had a BMI of 18.5-24.9, 16.4% were 25.0-29.9, and 6.3% had a BMI above 30.0. Education level, number of children and age were positively correlated with BMI. Of the 29 women classified as overweight or obese, 45% of them categorised themselves as “healthy or about the right weight”. Of the 27 women who were classified as underweight, 40% of them categorised themselves as “healthy or about the right”. 50% of those classified as overweight/obese and 42.9% of those classified as underweight were concerned or unhappy with their weight. **Discussion**Similar proportions of underweight and overweight/obese in this population differs from the DHS results showing 7% of women as underweight and 45.3% overweight. This suggests a need for further research to identify trends in sub-population groups that may be hidden by national findings. Our findings suggest that health promotion activities must address unhealthy weight as a whole, rather than only overweight and obesity. Misperceptions and lack of concern was common, which may affect the uptake of health promotional messages and activities, so interventions should address perceptions and understandings of BMI. **Keywords****Sri Lanka, Obesity, Overweight, BMI, Weight perception, Health Promotion, Non-communicable Disease, Reproductive-age** |