Evaluation of Nutritional Status of College Girl Students in terms of Haemoglobin levels and BMI

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Abstract
**Background:** Anemia is a condition that develops when blood lacks enough healthy red blood cells or hemoglobin. Due to high demands for the requirement of iron and other micronutrients as well loss of blood during menstruation, the college going girls of age group between 18 and 22 are at major risk of nutritional anaemia. On the other hand, change in life style habits and diet leads to the prevalence of obesity and being increased in developing countries worldwide.

**Objective:** The aim of the present study was to determine the levels of haemoglobin and Body Mass Index (BMI) for the college girls as this will help in assessing their health status with respect to anaemia and obesity.

**Methods:** 200 girl students of age group 18-22 years were evaluated for hemoglobin levels and 195 of the same students for their BMI levels.

**Results:** The haemoglobin levels ranged between 7.2 to 14.9 g/dL. The percentage of students with severe, moderate, mild and non–anaemia were 1.5, 18.5, 20.5 and 59.5% respectively. These results clearly suggested that 39% of the graduate girl students were having mild to moderate anemia and 1.5% girls were severely anaemic. The BMI values have shown that 55.38% students belonged to the normal weight category, 17.44% were underweight, 16.92% were overweight and 10.23% were obese.

**Conclusion:** This study has clearly shown that early detection and effective awareness programs are very much necessary to educate the college girl students in managing conditions like anemia, obesity and other related health complications.

**Keywords:** Anemia, college girls, BMI, Obesity.

**INTRODUCTION**
The report on Census of India, 2013 states that 57.4% of women in rural areas and 50.9% women in urban areas suffered from anemia during 2005-06. The share of anemic women across the age groups 15-19 years, 20-29 years, 30-39 years and 40-49 years is centered around 55% during the same period. Prevalence of anemia in India is among the highest in the world. It is obvious that India’s contribution both to the prevalence of anemia in pregnancy and maternal deaths due to anemia is higher than warranted by the size of its population.
The results of various reports have shown that over 70 percent of pregnant women and adolescent girls in India were anaemic. Recent results have shown that the rural population of India is suffering with anaemia with majority of children <10 years, women after puberty, and older adults. Inadequate dietary iron, folate intake due to low vegetable consumption, low B12 intake and poor bioavailability of dietary iron from the fibre, phytate rich Indian diets are the major factors responsible for high prevalence of anaemia. Iron deficiency anaemia adversely affect the immune status and morbidity from infections of all age groups, the use of energy sources by muscles and thus the physical capacity and work performance of adolescents and adults of all age groups. During the first two trimesters of pregnancy, iron deficiency anaemia increases the risk for preterm labour, low birth weight and infant mortality. Studies have shown that majority of university students, especially female, were anemic that might be aggravated by food habit and lack of awareness. Non pregnant women aged less than 25 years are most affected by anaemia whereas women’s education and standard of living in the households have a vital role in reducing anaemia. Calculation of individual BMI from weight and height remains a valid tool for epidemiological studies on assessment of nutritional status and a large study on school children of age group 5-13 years have shown that 29.44% children were underweight while 0.78% children were either overweight or obese. Only 56.7% were found in the normal BMI range, 10% underweight, 24% overweight and 9.3% were obese in undergraduate medical students.

Keeping in view of the alarming conditions of the above stated, it is necessary to bring awareness and educate the children, adolescents and at marriage levels, especially girls since they are at high risk, because of menstrual cycles. Inadequate care in the diet and exercise leads to problems of anaemia varying from moderate to severe and overweight to obesity. These changes in their health status will ultimately affect their reproductive capacity and leads to other lifestyle disorders. In order to bring such kind of awareness in the college girls, the present study was designed to measure hemoglobin levels thereby understanding the prevalence of anaemia, and to calculate BMI values, thereby knowing the body weight condition. These two parameters indicate the general health status and will help the girl students to become more health cautious and enable them for better management of their dietary habits and lifestyle.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Subjects and Study design
200 under graduate and post graduate girl students of the college with age group between 18 and 22 years were evaluated for hemoglobin levels. The students were made aware of the purpose of the study and taken their written consent. The measurement of Hb was relied on the services of a well-equipped clinical laboratory, using automated hematology analyzers which are reliable and accurate. This system is an automated blood cell counter which measures hemoglobin using non-cyanide method and was carried out by electrical impedance method. Criteria for anaemia among these students were accepted as haemoglobin value <12 gm/dl as per W.H.O. recommendations. For calculating BMI, height of students was measured using standardized steel anthropometric rod with parallel bar (accuracy ±0.1 cm). Weight was measured with the electronic weighing scale (accuracy ±10 g). The subjects were asked to remove their footwear and accessories before measuring their weights. Scales were calibrated after each measurement. Accuracy of weighing scale was verified from time to time against known weights. Body mass index (BMI) was calculated as body weight (in kilograms)/height (in meters) squared.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The hemoglobin cut-off values suggested by WHO are used to diagnose anaemia in students and the cut-off values defining mild, moderate and severe anaemia are presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Haemoglobin levels to diagnose anaemia at sea level (g/dL)\textsuperscript{15}

| Population | Non-Anaemia | Anaemia | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |
| | | Mild | Moderate | Severe | |
| Non-pregnant women (15 years of age and above) | 12 or higher | 11.0-11.9 | 8.0-10.9 | lower than 8.0 | |

Results of haemoglobin levels in the present study are shown both in terms of percentage and number of students with severe, moderate, mild and non–anaemia in Table.2.

Table 2: Showing the number of girl students and the percentages with different levels of anemia ((g/dL)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Severe &lt; 8</th>
<th>Moderate 8-10.9</th>
<th>Mild 11-11.9</th>
<th>Non-Anaemia &gt;12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.of students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Graphical representation showing the percentage of college girl students with different levels of Anemia.

Figure 2: Graphical representation showing the number of girl students at each hemoglobin range and condition of anemia.

The percentage of girl students with non-anemic condition is only 59.5% which causes a concern about their health status. Our data is in correlation with the other reports as WHO database on global prevalence of anemia and which has reported an overall prevalence of 25% where 65.5% of preschool children, 48.2% of pregnant women and 45.7% of non-pregnant women were estimated to
have anemia. Report by Saksham Kumar had also shown that 52.6 per cent of the college going girls are non anemic, whereas 45.1 per cent of college girls had 9-11% and 2.3 per cent had 6-8 gram percentage of hemoglobin. Overall the percentage of anemic students falls in the range of 40-47% of total category.

Body mass index or BMI is a means of representing a healthy weight for height. BMI can also be used as a screening tool to determine the risk associated with health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. BMI is used to broadly define different weight groups in adults 20 years old or older. The same groups apply to both men and women. Table.3 provides the categorized weights of an individual based on their BMI values.

Table 3: Categorisation of Body Weight Based on Body Mass Index (BMI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Underweight</th>
<th>Normal weight</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Obese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI is less than 18.5</td>
<td>BMI is 18.5 to 24.9</td>
<td>BMI is 25 to 29.9</td>
<td>BMI is 30 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the present study, the BMI values of girl students were also calculated and categorised into four groups as underweight, normal weight, overweight and obese and these values are summarized in Table.4 and Figure.3

Table 4: BMI values in college girl students (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI values</th>
<th>Under weight</th>
<th>Normal weight</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Obese</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>17.44</td>
<td>55.38</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>10.23</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure3: Graphical representation of categorization of Body Weight Based on Body mass index (BMI)

The present study has shown that among all the college girl students observed, only 55.38% of students belonged to the normal weight category whereas the rest of the students were underweight, overweight or obese. These results are in correlation with the results reported in female medical students as 56% were within the normal weight range.
CONCLUSION

Adolescent girls and post adolescent girls apart from pregnant women are at major risk of nutritional anaemia particularly iron deficiency anaemia. Iron requirements increase dramatically due to expansion of the total blood volume, lean body mass, and their entry into the reproductive cycle soon after menarche. The problem of anaemia arises mainly due to lack of balanced and nutritious diet which forces them to get into anaemic condition over a period of time. Therefore, it is essential to improve nutritional status of a girl who further makes up the family and society, which is possible only by implementing health education, early detection and effective management of anemia, especially through diet. The present study also clearly emphasizes the need for implementing the above said measures at school and college levels as nearly 40% of girl students tested are under anemic state. BMI forage correlates with clinical risk factors for cardiovascular disease including hyper lipidemia, elevated insulin levels and high blood pressure. Nearly 13.5 % students under study are overweight and obese clearly shows the need for health education for these students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Authors are thankful to the management and Principal Prof. Y. Ashok, Bhavan's Vivekananda College for providing necessary financial support and infrastructural facilities for carrying out this study. We are also thankful to the post graduate Biochemistry students of this college for their help in carrying out this study.

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