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Gestational diabetes in selected Southeast Asian countries: Prevalence, risk factors, potential actions

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Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) is increasing, particularly in Southeast Asia. This paper presents findings from a symposium organized by the International Life Sciences Institute Southeast Asia (ILSI SEA) which discussed the growing issue of gestational diabetes and how it can be addressed in the region. The objectives were to: (i) assess the prevalence of GDM in selected countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam) and identify nutritional and other risk factors; (ii) identify country actions to address GDM and challenges in implementing these actions; (iii) recommend measures to prevent/reduce the prevalence of GDM in Southeast Asia. Prevalence ranged from 1.9% in Indonesia to 20% in Vietnam. Nutritional risk factors for GDM were pre-pregnant overweight and obesity, dietary intake, and micronutrient status. Non-nutritional risk factors were family history of diabetes mellitus, history of GDM, obstetric history, use of corticosteroids and hormone contraceptives. Country-level actions to address GDM included modification of cultural beliefs and practices which may contribute to GDM, promotion of health literacy and diabetes education, and development of interventions particularly the use of medical nutrition therapy to promote ideal body weight during pregnancy, appropriate gestational weight gain, and removal of excess weight post-delivery. Challenges in GDM control were the high prevalence of overweight and obesity among women, the lack of pre-conceptual screening for GDM risk, lack of longitudinal health care for GDM mothers, and the lack of uniform guidelines and inadequate implementation within countries. Regional recommendations included universal screening for GDM to capture women

without risk factors, adoption of common diagnostic criteria across countries in the region, and stimulation of local research to identify best practices for prevention and management of GDM.

Recent Publications

1. Mohamed HJJ, Loy SL, Mitra AK, Kaur S, Teoh AN, Rahman SHA, Amarra MS. Maternal diet, nutritional status and infant birth weight in Malaysia: a scoping review. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*. 2022; 22:294.
2. Amarra MSV, de los Reyes F. Intake and sources of total sugar among Filipino children and adolescents aged 7 months to 18 years. *Clinical Nutrition ESPEN*. 2021, Vol. 41:PS600-S601.
3. Amarra MS, Capanzana MV, Gironella G, de los Reyes F. Identification of foods to monitor the sodium content of processed foods using nationally representative consumption data for developing a sodium reduction program in the Philippines. *Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences*. 2021; Vol.11. Iss510 No:829.

Biography

Maria Sofia V Amarra obtained her Ph.D. Nutrition from the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City and Certificate in Biochemistry from the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of the Philippines, Manila. She is currently a Faculty Member at the School of Nutrition, Philippine Women's University, Taft Avenue, Manila and professorial lecturer at the Department of Food Science and Nutrition, College of Home Economics, UP Diliman. Her previous affiliations were with the International Life Sciences Institute, Southeast Asia Region and the Food and Nutrition Research Institute, Department of Science and Technology. Her published studies examined how nutrition influences health in the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries.

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