ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES: The aim of the study is to determine the prevalence of anaemia in males in the age group of 30-65 years and females in the age group of15-65 years in a Palestinian village, and to examine the factors associated with the development of anaemia for more suitable national planning and more efficient service provision.

Subjects and Design: This is a cross-sectional survey. Data was collected from a sample consisting of 209 men in the age group 30-65 years, and 551 women in the age group of 15-65 years who make-up about 85% of the population in these age groups of the village. The design and methods of data collection included structured interviews and physical tests (anthropometric measurements and blood tests).

Results: The prevalence of anaemia among the females is moderate (17.8%), which is lower than the prevalence in Palestine as a whole and also in many developing countries in the region. However, the prevalence of anaemia among males is mild, close to the prevalence in the developed countries, and much less than the corresponding prevalence in the developing countries. Most anaemic cases suffer from iron deficiency.

The results of bivariate analysis indicated that the most significant risk factors in explaining variation in anaemia distribution among women were: age, marital status, number of living children a woman has, advanced stage in pregnancy, multigravidity, low level of education and the main occupation.

On the other hand, the variables that were most significant 'protective factors' (factors that are negatively associated with the development of anaemia) in explaining variance in anaemia distribution are lactation and hypertriglyceridemia.

The other variables in the study were less significant in explaining the variation in anaemia distribution, which were: pregnancy, age at marriage and age at

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first conception, history of abortion, obesity, central and overall, and the level of cholesterol in blood.

Based on the multivariate logistic regression, the variables chosen for analysis in the study explained 17% variance in anaemia distribution among females. After controlling all other variables in the study, the most significant factors contributing to the occurrence of anaemia are main occupation, age, and number of living children. Accordingly, the risk groups that were found to be the highest contributors to the prevalence of anaemia among women were housewives in the age group of 20-49 years with 2-17 children, and single non-working women in the age group of 20-29 years.

Conclusion: The prevalence of anaemia among females in the study population is moderate. This study shows that among women of childbearing age, both pregnant and non-pregnant women are vulnerable, and lactating women are at the same risk of developing anaemia as single women. Furthermore, single non-working women are at the same risk of developing anaemia as their married counterparts with 2 or more children. As such, and in line with the recommendations of the joint UNICEF/WHO consultation, intervention programs for combating anaemia must focus on all women of childbearing age, and not to be restricted to pregnant women, or, as this study seems to indicate, only on married women.