

CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON ADVERSE PREGNANCY OUTCOMES AMONG FEMALE HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

The weight of occupational risk on women in addition to men, is on their fecundity. NIOSH lists disorders of reproduction as one of the top ten leading work-related diseases and injuries. Nevertheless, women in the workforce is increasing and in healthcare, females make up the majority. This research is to observe the occurrences of adverse pregnancy outcomes among female healthcare workers in relation to their work schedules and its significance in relation to non-healthcare workers. A cross-sectional study was carried out using a questionnaire with 469 respondents; 339 healthcare and 130 non-healthcare workers, reporting 564 pregnancies. In this study, adverse pregnancy outcomes among female healthcare workers is significantly higher than non-healthcare workers. There are no significant findings between healthcare and non-healthcare workers with respect to the types of adverse pregnancy outcomes and the work schedule. However, from the respondents' lifetime pregnancy outcome, we find that complete miscarriage occurred more frequently among healthcare workers who work on shift. Healthcare workers do experience a higher risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, commonly occurring among those who work on shift/on-call.

Keywords: *Cross-Sectional Study, Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes, Female Healthcare Workers*

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a natural phenomenon and a process that ensures the continuation of the human species. Due to this natural ability, females need more health considerations and care. Tailored and specific programs are available to ensure their good health. In this period of advance development and progress, more and more women are becoming independent and carrying out roles, duties and jobs formerly dominated by men. With this, we see an increasing number of women into the workforce. Now, they too are exposed to hazards from the working environment similar to men (Burdorf *et al.*, 2006). The health risk of these hazards on women is more over man. Their fecundity; their ability to reproduce and remain fertile is at higher risk compared to men. Many studies have showed that stressors from the working environment did affect reproductive system and over time. Hence, many precautionary measures had been developed to protect them.

Healthcare working environment is not free of hazards, which carry risk that can take effect on the

reproductive system of female healthcare workers. The nature of healthcare work by itself, carries a large responsibility. Simply because it deals with human lives hence, we must try ensuring that there is close to no margin of error. Hence, there is no doubt in sentiment that psychosocial stress does exist here (Familoni, 2008). In addition to psychosocial stress, the long working hours with various time schedules also constitutes their working environment, which is also a risk-carrying hazard. The nursing section makes up the bulk of healthcare workers predominated by females. Hence, it is only rightful to explore their health risk. In this study, their pregnancy outcome reflects their fecundity.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) lists disorders of reproduction as one of the top ten leading work-related diseases and injuries (Burdorf *et al.*, 2006; Figà-Talamanca, 2006; Yamada, 1986). However currently there is no surveillance for such disorders of reproduction at national level. Moreover, hazards due to occupation or otherwise is not listed in Malaysia. Following NIOSH and reviews from