

Morbidity and outcome of low birthweight babies of adolescent mothers at Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi

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Abstract

Objectives: To compare the morbidity and outcome of low birthweight babies (birthweight < 2000 gm) of adolescent (age < 20 years) and older mothers. **Design:** Cross sectional descriptive study. **Setting:** The newborn Unit of the Kenyatta National Hospital. **Main outcome measures:** All babies weighing less than 2000 gm at birth whose mothers consented to the study had their gestational age verified using the Dubowitz scoring system. They were then followed up by daily clinical assessment until discharge, death or up to one month in the ward. The babies were divided into two groups according to their mother's age and then compared with respect to episodes of illness, duration of hospital stay, and overall outcome. **Results:** One hundred and forty two babies were studied. Of these, 64 were born to adolescent mothers. Babies of the adolescent mothers tended to be more premature ($p = 0.0174$), be lower in weight ($p = 0.0078$), had more occurrences of respiratory distress and anaemia (probably reflecting their increased prematurity) and had frequent multiple morbidity events. They also had longer hospital stay and they were more likely to die (57.7% compared to 42.3% of babies of older mothers). **Conclusion:** Low birthweight babies of the adolescent mothers were found to be more likely to have increased morbidity and adverse outcome compared to similar babies of older mothers