

Prevalence of Anemia among Preschool Age Children

Saleh M. Alqahtani, MD* Meshari M. Dalbough, MD**
Salman A. Asiri, MBBS*** Ahmed Albishri, MD****
Mohammed A. Asiri, MBBS***** Mohammed Alajam, MD*****

Objective: To evaluate the prevalence of anemia in general and microcytic hypochromic anemia among preschool-age children.

Design: A Retrospective Cohort Study.

Setting: Three government hospitals and two private hospitals, Abha and Khamis Mushait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Method: The study population included all children aged 6 months to 59 months seen in the emergency room (ER) and had a complete blood count. Hemoglobin level (Hb), mean corpuscular volume (MCV) and mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH) were estimated.

Result: The study included 2,415 children aged 6 to 59 months with a mean of 29.7 and a standard deviation of ± 17.9 months. More than half of them were males, 1,446 (59.9%), and the majority were Saudis, 1,921 (79.5%). The prevalence of anemia was 26.4%; mostly mild, 387 (16%), or moderate, 232 (9.6%). Severe anemia was found in 19 (0.8%) children. Microcytic hypochromic anemia was found in 679 (26.9%).

Conclusion: Anemia is still a public health problem among preschool children in Southwest Saudi Arabia, despite the improvement in socio-economic status. Further research is recommended to evaluate the underlying factors, particularly nutritional habits.