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Is anaemia associated with dietary habits and increased menstrual bleeding?**Samarakoon D.N.A.W.¹, Amarathunga A.A.M.D.D.N.¹, Perera P.P.R.²**

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Anaemia is a major public health problem that has affected around 25% of the world's population. It is one of the major nutritional deficiency disorders in Sri Lanka. Objectives were to determine the prevalence and some factors associated with anaemia among female hostellers of University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 370 female undergraduates (20-26 years), randomly selected using blind draw method. Cyanomethaemoglobin method was performed. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used to retrieve information on dietary habits and menstruation. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square (χ^2) test were used to analyze frequencies and associations.

Of the 370 females, 33.6% ($n=124$) were anaemic ($Hb < 12g/dL$). The corresponding p values between anaemia and some of the factors were; vegetarian ($P=0.055$), skipping breakfast ($P=0.216$), daily consumption of dairy products ($P=0.101$) and animal products ($P=0.103$), consumption of at least 3 vegetables per day ($P=0.091$), at least 2 fruits per day ($P=0.242$) and at least 4 portions of green leaves per week ($P=0.929$) and increased menstrual bleeding ($P=0.825$). Proportion of anaemia in the population didn't show a statistically significant association ($P > 0.05$) with selected dietary habits and menstrual bleeding.

One third of the female undergraduates were anaemic. This may have an effect on their study skills and day to day activities in the University. Selected dietary habits and menstrual blood loss weren't contributory factors for anaemia in this population. Further research should be done to determine the contributing factors as this population make up the future of the country.