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Nutritional status of pre-school children in the Kekirawa divisional secretariat area of the Anuradhapura District in Sri Lanka

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In Ayurveda wellbeing of physical, mental and spiritual status is known as health. This agrees with the definition of health defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). Underweight, stunting, wasting and overweight are important parameters related to the nutrition status as declared by the WHO. Height for age $\leq -2SD$ from the mean, weight for height $\leq -2SD$ from the mean and weight for age $\leq -2SD$ were defined as stunted, wasted and underweight respectively. The results of a survey carried out in 2007 in Sri Lanka highlighted that prevalence of underweight, wasting and stunting among children under five years was 21.1%, 14.7% and 17.3% respectively. Undernutrition has been identified as a major problem among preschool children in Sri Lanka. With this background, a preliminary investigation was designed to assess understand the nutritional status of preschool children in selected rural areas. Collection of anthropometric measurements such as height and weight and evaluation of the nutritional status of preschool children were the main tasks of the study. The study was carried out in the Kekirawa divisional secretariat area of the Anuradhapura District. Ten preschools in the division were selected randomly. 127 female (50.19%) and 126 male (49.80%) preschool children were enrolled for the assessment of nutritional status. With the permission of pre-school teachers, mothers of the children were instructed to meet the Community Medical Officer (Ayurveda) on scheduled dates with their children to obtain the anthropometric measurements. The height and weight of children were measured using a Stadiometer and a scale with a digital display. Recorded data were processed using WHO Anthro software- 2011. Age distribution of the sample was identified as 36 – 47 months and 48 – 60 months. The results revealed that wasting, stunting and underweight prevalence among the surveyed preschool children were 32.4% 24.5% and 42.3% respectively. The status of male wasting was 5.6% $\leq -3SD$, 27.8% $\leq -2SD$, stunting was 4.8% $\leq -3SD$, 19% $\leq -2SD$ and underweight was 5.6% $\leq -3SD$, 34.1% $\leq -2SD$. The status of female wasting was 3.9% $\leq -3SD$, 27.6% $\leq -2SD$, stunting was 3.9% $\leq -3SD$, 21.3% $\leq -2SD$ and underweight was 10.2% $\leq -3SD$, 34.6% $\leq -2SD$. According to the survey prevalence of undernutrition was assessed as 4.7% severely wasted, 27.7% wasted, 4.3% severely stunted, 20.2% stunted, 7.9% severely under weight and 34.4% under weight.