Under-utilized approaches to control anaemia in developing countries

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UNDER-UTILIZED APPROACHES TO CONTROL ANAEMIA IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. With good antenatal and obstetric care most anaemia related maternal deaths are preventable, and policies to reduce anaemia prevalence should not be divorced from efforts to provide adequate antenatal and delivery facilities for women in developing countries.

2. Primary prevention of iron deficiency and malaria in young children could have substantive effects on reducing child mortality from severe anaemia.

3. In order to assess the effectiveness of interventions for reducing iron deficiency or malarial anaemia it is necessary to have information concerning the haematological profile of the targeted population.

4. Household provision of iron cooking pots in developing countries could provide an innovative way to prevent iron deficiency and anaemia in malarious areas where regular iron supplementation is problematic.

5. The low acceptability of iron pots for cooking could limit their value as an intervention to control iron deficiency anaemia.

6. It is important to assess acceptability of interventions in order to facilitate their adoption in traditional communities.

7. Compliance with pot use varies considerably between countries depending on several factors, including: size of the cooking pot, targeted user groups, whether the pot is used as an extra or replacement pot, and familiarity with cast iron pots.

8. Malawian foods which included a staple (Nsima), relish vegetables and beans prepared in cast iron pots have an increased iron content.

9. Malaria chemoprophylaxis in children improves mean haemoglobin levels and reduces severe anaemia, clinical malaria attacks, parasite and spleen rates. Also it reduces outpatient attendance and hospital admissions and there is evidence that it reduces mortality.

10. Targeted prophylaxis with antimalarials or intermittent prevention treatment in children could be considered within integrated health programmes for specific time periods.

11. Countries should develop and implement a package of integrated care interventions related to the local conditions to achieve the goal of reducing by one third the prevalence of anaemia by 2010.

12. Sometimes seemingly unimportant events can have great consequences.

Paul Prinsen Geerligs, 25 maart 2004