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WASUNTHAREE SAEREESUCHART: THE ASSOCIATION OF FOOD HABITS AND IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA AMONG WOMEN FACTORY WORKERS OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN CHACHENGSAO PROVINCE. THESIS ADVISORS : PRASIT LEERAPAN, B.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D. NONGLUK PANCHARUNITI, D.D.S. M.P.H., Dr.P.H. Dr. SANGSOM SINAWAT, M.D., MCN. THARA VIRIYAPANIT, M.Sc. NUTRITION., 156 P. ISBN 974 - 664 - 418- 1..

The objectives of this research were to determine the associations of food habits which were the risk behaviors that led to iron deficiency. The study design was a survey research. Three-hundred-ninety women of reproductive age between 16-40 years old who worked in a factory in Chachengsao Province were included in this study. Questionnaires were employed to collect the data on perception of knowing the iron deficiency risks behaviors, food consumption and food beliefs related to iron deficiency anemia. Other demographic variables were also included in the study.

About 47% of the subjects were at risk of iron deficiency anemia. Food consumption behaviors were significantly associated statistically with perception on benefits and barriers in preventing iron deficiency anemia (with $\chi^2 = 10.701$, $p = 0.030$), and also was significantly associated statistically with number of working hours per day (with $\chi^2 = 10.968$, $p = 0.004$). Food consumption behaviors could be explained by number of working hours per day, and single status of subjects with adjusted $R^2 = 0.026$ ($p = 0.018$). It was found that subjects with a lower score of food frequency consumption were 5 times at risk of having iron deficiency anemia as compared to those with higher scores (95% CI= 0.170, 0.860). Those who had lower scores of perception on severity of iron deficiency anemia were 1.7 times at risk of developing iron deficiency anemia as compared to those higher scores (95% CI = 1.007, 2.758). Those who had lower scores of perception on benefit and barriers in preventing iron deficiency anemia were 2.5 times at risk of having iron deficiency anemia as compared to those with higher scores (95% CI = 1.587, 4.180). It was recommended that food cost, number of family members, quantity of iron intake using a 3 day food record, and past illness history in last 2 months should be considered as risk factors of food consumption behaviors which lead to iron deficiency anemia. Appropriate nutritional education according to Thai Food Base Dietary Guideline was another important issue to be recognized.