ASSOCIATION OF HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY (HFI) AND ANEMIA AMONG FILIPINO WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE, 15-49 YEARS OLD

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Background:
Household Food Insecurity (HFI) is defined as the lack of access to a diet of sufficient quality and quantity necessary for a productive and healthy life. In the 2013 National Nutrition Survey, almost 17.0% of Filipino households experience severe food insecurity. Intermittent and prolonged food insecurity can potentially worsen nutritional status of women of reproductive age (WRA) and even the ability to enter the workforce and thrive as an adult as they consume a diet inadequate of nutrients particularly iron thus, anemia stands out as the most prevalent.

Objective:
This study aimed to determine the association of household food insecurity and anemia among Filipino WRA.

Materials and Methods:
The study utilized data from 7,994 women whose age ranged from 15 to 49 years old from 35,653 households in the 8th National Nutrition Survey. Anemia cut-offs was defined as hemoglobin concentration of <120g/L for adult, non-lactating and non-pregnant women over 15 years old; <110 g/L for pregnant women, and <120 g/L for lactating women (World Health Organization, 1972) Pearson’s Chi-square was applied to determine the association of HFI and anemia of WRA.

Results:
Findings revealed that a positive relationship between food insecurity and anemia among child bearing age. Women who live in households with even the mildest experience of food insecurity were more likely to become anemic (28.2%). However, other factors such as age, physiological status, wealth, educational attainment and ethnicity could also affect the iron status of women.

Conclusion and Recommendation:
Study showed that the risk of having anemia is greater in WRA experiencing different degree of food insecurity. Early detection of anemia and regular monitoring of iron status in WRA is very important. Nutrition programs targeting at maternal health could be integrated with nutrition education to encourage best practices of solving anemia among adult women.