



## Short Communication

# Campaign against Anemia in Children

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## Abstract

*Iron-deficiency anemia afflicts around 50% of preschoolers, impairing their neuropsychomotor development. The campaign aimed to enlighten the causes of iron-deficiency anemia in children and the harm to their development. It also suggests a suitable dietary guidance as a way of controlling the disease and highlights the importance of breastfeeding, the prevention and treatment using iron through drugs. Twenty-seven basic care units were used in the campaign. Posters, leaflets and lectures about anemia in children were performed by medical students for patients from such basic care units. About 2,000 patients had explanations about iron-deficiency anemia in children during the campaign.*

**Keywords:** Iron-deficiency anemia, child, basic care unit, campaign.

## Introduction

Iron deficiency anemia in children happens due to the lack of iron and it reaches mainly preschoolers and pregnant women<sup>1,2</sup>. considering this data, the campaign against anemia was a project from the professor and chief of pediatrics of unilago medical school, performed by the medical students of the same institution, together with the local city hall.

The campaign was divided in two phases. The first one consisted of two days of theory classes for the students willing to take part in the project. The second one had these students lecturing and guiding parents and relatives in all basic care units of the city, as well as distributing leaflets containing information about an iron-rich diet and the importance of breastfeeding.

The main aim of the campaign is to offer the patients of the basic care units some guidance about iron-deficiency anemia in children through explanations of its causes and consequences, as well as recommendations on how to prevent and treat it.

## Methodology

Educational campaign about anemia in children performed in the Basic Care Units, through presentation of posters and leaflets by the medical students of Unilago Medical School, aiming to inform the population about preventive strategies and effective methods of treating iron-deficiency anemia in children. Twenty-seven Basic Care Units were visited during a week

(from March 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018) and lectures about anemia in children were performed. The project was divided in two phases: the first one consisted of theory classes for all the medical students who took part in the project. The classes were overseen by the professor responsible for the project. The second phase was developed by the students in all Basic Care Units of the city through lectures and guidance to parents and relatives, as well as the distribution of leaflets containing information and advice about an iron-rich diet.

The students were divided into 7 groups of three people each. Six groups visited 4 Basic Care Units and one group, three Basic Care Units, adding up to twenty-seven Basic Care Units. After each day presenting the posters, they were left at the Medical School so the next groups could use them the day after until all the Basic Care Units were visited. Two students held the posters and cleared up doubts of the audience. The other one lectured, and, in the end, the three students answered the children's parents questions.

The leaflet presented explanation about iron-deficiency anemia in children, its causes, the importance of breastfeeding to control it, food which help or inhibit iron absorption in the intestine, as well as recommendation on how to prepare an iron-rich meal to 6-month-old children.

What's the diet recommendation for a 6-month child with anemia<sup>5,6</sup>?

**Table-1:** Suggestion of a meal for lunch and dinner (choose one item from each group).

Rice – corn – potato – cassava – water yam – winged yam
Beans – soybean – peas – lentil – chickpea
Beef – fish – poultry meat (one item, 5 times a week), bovine liver (once a week) and gizzard or chicken liver (once a week) – 70 to 100 grams/day
Lettuce, watercress, kale, spinach
Carrot – pumpkin – aubergine - chayote
Offer vitamin-C-rich juice after the meals (20 ml)

## Conclusion

The project aimed to clarify iron-deficiency anemia for the Basic Care Units' users. It explained causes of the disease and highlighted the importance of breastfeeding. It also talked about which food can ease or inhibit iron absorption<sup>3,7</sup>. One of the strategies to combat anemia in children is to teach the population about it<sup>3</sup>. Around 1,000 people, among children's parents and relatives, took part in the presentation of the posters and the lecture.

Thus, dietary guidance and breastfeeding are extremely important for the population of Basic Care Units, as well as information about food fortification with iron in the most consumed food, in order to prevent and treat the disease, aiming to fight against such severe public health problem, once it affects children's neuropsychomotor development<sup>2,3,8</sup>.

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