

THE PROFILE OF CONGENITAL ANOMALIES AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO INFANT MORTALITY AMONG THE ARAB POPULATION IN ISRAEL

L. Jaber¹, J. Tarabeia², Y. Amitai², A. Ifrah², T. Shohat², M. Green²

¹*Pediatrics Department, Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel, Petah Tikva*

²*Ministry of Health, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel*

jabe@bezeqint.net

Background: Congenital and hereditary diseases have been recognized as being major health problems.

Methods: Data about mortality from congenital malformations (CM) among 0-4 year-olds was taken from Cases of Death, 1977, Central Bureau of Statistics. The Infant Mortality Rates (IMR), divided by population group and causes of death, were taken from the Department of Mother, Child and Adolescent Health in the Ministry of Health.

Results: The total CM rate per 1,000 live births was higher among Arabs than Jews (21.08 and 19.57, respectively). In 2000, 3,202 CM were reported in 2,742 newborns, 31.7% (n = 870) of them were among Arabs. High rates of neural tube defects (NTD) were noted among Bedouins. This rate was 3.5 times higher than among Jews. CM are the leading cause of infant mortality in the Arab population. They comprise 40% of the total causes of infant deaths among Arabs and 23% among Jews. The IMR due to CM in the 2000 was higher among Arabs than Jews (3.4 times and 0.9 per 1,000 live births, respectively). In the southern district, this rate was 8 times higher among Bedouins compared to Jews living in the same district (6.4 compared to 0.8 per 1,000 live births, respectively). From 1969 to 1997, the CM mortality rate among 0.4-year-olds decreased in both sexes among Arabs and Jews.

Conclusions: Primary prevention programs should be initiated immediately to reduce CM among the Arab population particularly in the southern district where consanguineous marriages are more common.

