# **Research Article**

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# Late initiation of antenatal care and its determinants: a hospital based cross-sectional study

Thin Z. Aung<sup>1</sup>, Win M. Oo<sup>2</sup>\*, Win Khaing<sup>3</sup>, Nay Lwin<sup>2</sup>, Hlaing T. Dar<sup>2</sup>

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# \*Correspondence: Dr. Win M. Oo,

E-mail: drwinuch@gmail.com

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Antenatal care (ANC) is important for both maternal and fetal health. Pregnant women with late initiation of ANC are more likely to attain poor outcomes of pregnancy. Little is known about the magnitude of receiving late ANC among pregnant women in Myanmar. Therefore, the present study was conducted to determine the prevalence of late initiation of ANC and its determinants among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic at Pyin-Oo-Lwin General Hospital, Mandalay region during 2014.

**Methods:** A hospital-based cross-sectional study was conducted. Altogether 333 pregnant women were included in the study. Data were collected through face-to-face interview after getting informed consent from the respondents.

**Results:** The prevalence of late initiation of ANC was 56.2% (95% CI: 50.6%, 61.6%). Univariate analysis revealed that residence; education and occupation of pregnant woman, husband's occupation, gravidity, parity and being planned pregnancy were significantly related to late initiation of ANC. Based on the results of multivariate logistic regression analysis, residence, education of pregnant woman, occupation of husband, parity and being planned pregnancy were identified as significant determinants of receiving late ANC.

**Conclusions:** Late ANC attendance is high in the study area. Hence, it is important to provide health education on the timing of ANC among women with reproductive age. Community's awareness on importance of receiving early ANC also needs to be promoted. Family planning program (i.e., birth-spacing in Myanmar) should be enhanced to prevent unplanned pregnancies.

Key words: Antenatal care, Late antenatal care, Late initiation, Mandalay, Myanmar

# INTRODUCTION

In the life of a woman, a family and a society, pregnancy is one of the important periods. Antenatal care (ANC) is special care for pregnant women with the aim of preventing health problems or getting early detection if any in both fetus and mother. <sup>1-3</sup> Moreover, pregnancy is a crucial time to promote healthy lifestyles and parenting skills. Therefore, ANC is important for health of both mother and fetus. Although there has been little meticulous evaluation of optimal timing of the initiation of ANC, pregnant women who receive late or no ANC

are more likely to have poor or unfavorable outcomes of pregnancy.<sup>4-6</sup> Late initiation of ANC was reported as a significant risk factor for maternal mortality in some studies.<sup>7-9</sup> Therefore, ANC should begin as early as possible either at hospital/health center or during domiciliary visit of health workers in order to have sufficient time to manage risk factors, if present or to perform appropriate screening for early and timely referral.<sup>10,11</sup>

Although maternal mortality worldwide drops by about 44% between 1990 and 2015, more than 800 women

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Myanmar

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Faculty of Medicine, SEGi University, Malaysia

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Medicine, Mandalay, Myanmar

(99% of them are from developing countries) die daily due to preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. In Myanmar, maternal mortality ratio is reduced from 520 to 130 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2015, and coverage of ANC is more than 80%. Is However, maternal death remains high among South-East Asian countries. Essides, little is known about the magnitude of receiving late ANC among pregnant women in Myanmar. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the prevalence of late initiation of ANC and its determinants among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic at Pyin-Oo-Lwin General Hospital, Mandalay Region, Myanmar during 2014.

#### **METHODS**

A hospital-based cross-sectional study was carried out between September and November, 2014. Sample size was calculated using Epi-info version 7.0 statistical software. The prevalence of receiving late ANC was estimated to be 30% with 95% confidence level and 5% absolute precision. 16 Therefore, the sample size requirement was 323. All pregnant women who received ANC at Pyin-Oo-Lwin General Hospital during study period were recruited after getting informed consent. Data were collected by face-to-face interview. Information on last menstrual period, date of receiving first ANC and gestational age at first ANC were confirmed by observing prenatal record/register. Late initiation of ANC was defined as getting first ANC after 16 completed weeks of gestation. <sup>17,18</sup> Socio-demographic characteristics of both pregnant woman and her husband such as education, occupation and residence, and obstetric characteristics such as gravidity, parity and whether or not the present pregnancy was planned were considered as potential determinants. Age of pregnant woman, perception of pregnant woman on ANC, size and type of family, and per capita household's income were regarded as confounders. Perception towards ANC was assessed by means of questionnaires. If a pregnant mother reported that ANC was important for both mother and baby, she was considered to have good perception. Otherwise her perception towards ANC was regarded as unfavorable.

### Statistical analysis

Data entry and analysis was done using Stata 11.0 statistical package. Proportion with 95% confidence interval was used to estimate the prevalence of late initiation of ANC among study population. Multivariate logistic regression analysis with manual backward deletion procedure was applied in assessing the determinants of late initiation of ANC. A variable with p-value  $\leq 0.25$  in univariate logistic regression was selected as a candidate for inclusion in multivariate analysis.

# **RESULTS**

Altogether 333 pregnant women voluntarily participated in this study. Socio-demographic and obstetric characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Most of the respondents were ages of 25 years and older (61.0%), and rural dwellers (70.6%).

Table 1: Socio-demographic, economic and familial characteristics.

Variables	Frequency (n = 333)	Percentage					
Age in completed years							
<25	130	39.0					
≥25	203	61.0					
Residence							
Urban	98	29.4					
Rural	235	70.6					
Education of pregnant won	Education of pregnant women						
Primary (up to grade 5)	146	43.9					
Secondary (grade 6 to 11)	132	43.9 39.6					
Tertiary (University and	55	39.6 16.5					
graduates)	33	10.5					
Occupation of pregnant women							
Absent (Housewife)	145	43.5					
Present	188	56.5					
Education of husbands							
Primary (up to grade 5)	139	41.7					
Secondary (grade 6 to 11)	159	47.8					
Tertiary (University and	35	10.5					
graduates)		10.5					
Occupation of husbands							
Farmers	115	34.5					
Laborers	130	39.1					
Others	88	26.4					
Monthly per-capita househ	old's income						
< Median	207	62.2					
≥ Median	126	37.8					
Type of family							
Nuclear family	194	58.3					
Three generation family	105	31.5					
Joint (or) extended family	34	10.2					
Size of family							
≤5	265	79.6					
>5	68	20.4					

Mean (sd) ages were 26.9 (6.1) years and median (range) monthly per-capita household's income were 50,000 (10,000 – 750,000) kyats. Mean (sd) size of family was 4.1 (2.1).

Table 2: Obstetric characteristics and perception of respondents on ANC.

Variables	Frequency (n = 333)	Percentage
Gravidity		
One	172	51.7
Two	89	26.7
Three and above	72	21.6
Parity		
Zero	187	56.2
One	91	27.3
Two and above	55	16.5
Planned-pregnancy		
Yes	215	64.6
No	118	35.4
Perceptions on ANC		
Good	200	60.1
Unfavorable	133	39.9

Obstetric characteristics and perception of pregnant mothers on ANC were described in Table 2. More than half of the participants were first gravida (51.7%) and did not have any experience on live birth (56.2%). Almost two thirds (64.6%) and three fifths (60.1%) had planned-pregnancy and good (or) favourable perception towards ANC, respectively.

Table 3: The prevalence of late ANC among respondents.

Late initiation of ANC	Frequency (n = 333)	Percentage (95% CI)
Present	187	56.2% (50.6%, 61.6%)
Absent	146	43.8% (38.4%, 49.4%)

Table 4: Results of logistic regression analyses.

Variables	Univariate analysis	Univariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
variables	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value	
Age of respondents	1.02 (0.98, 1.05)	0.375			
Residence					
Urban	Reference		Reference		
Rural	0.48 (0.29, 0.79)	0.004	0.47 (0.27, 0.83)	0.009	
Education of respondents					
Primary	Reference		Reference		
Secondary	0.84 (0.52, 1.36)	0.490	0.80 (0.47, 1.37)	0.416	
Tertiary	0.38 (0.20, 0.73)	0.003	0.34 (0.16, 0.75)	0.007	
Occupation of respondents					
Absent	Reference				
Present	0.56 (0.36, 0.87)	0.010			
Education of husbands					
Primary	Reference				
Secondary	1.10 (0.70, 1.75)	0.679			
Tertiary	0.66 (0.31, 1.39)	0.272			
Occupation of husbands					
Farmers	Reference		Reference		
Laborers	2.54 (1.51, 4.27)	0.000	2.19 (1.24, 3.86)	0.007	
Others	1.22 (0.70, 2.13)	0.476	1.50 (0.76, 2.96)	0.242	
Per-capita household's income	1.00 (0.99, 1.00)	0.915			
Type of family					
Nuclear family	Reference				
Three generation family	0.81 (0.50, 1.30)	0.382			
Joint (or) extended family	1.60 (0.74, 3.46)	0.235			
Size of family					
≤5	Reference				
_ >5	1.45 (0.83, 2.50)	0.189			
Gravidity					
One	Reference				
Two	1.37 (0.82, 2.30)	0.227			
Three and above	2.49 (1.38, 4.48)	0.002			
Parity					
Zero	Reference		Reference		
One	1.98 (1.18, 3.31)	0.009	1.85 (1.07, 3.22)	0.029	
Two and above	3.29 (1.68, 6.45)	0.000	2.17 (1.02, 4.61)	0.045	
Planned-pregnancy					
Yes	Reference		Reference		
No	2.39 (1.48, 3.83)	0.000	1.86 (1.09, 3.18)	0.024	
Perceptions on ANC	· ·				
Unfavorable	Reference				
Good	0.98 (0.63, 1.53)	0.944			

Table 3 shows the prevalence of late initiation of ANC among respondents. More than half of pregnant women (56.2%) took first ANC for their present pregnancies after 16 weeks of gestation. Gestational age at the time of first ANC visit ranged between 7 and 34 weeks. Mean

(standard deviation) and median gestational ages at the time of initiation of ANC were 18.23 (4.98) and 18 weeks, respectively.

Main reasons of receiving late ANC reported by the respondents were 'being busy' (29.0%), 'misbelieve that it is appropriate time' (26.3%) and 'due to someone's advice' (18.3%). 'Economic reason' (i.e., financial constraint) was the least (1.5%).

Results of logistic regression analyses were described in Table 4. Although both gravidity and parity were significantly related to late ANC in univariate analysis, only parity was selected for multivariate analysis to avoid collinearity. Based on multivariate logistic regression analysis, residence, education of pregnant mothers, occupation of their husbands, having planned-pregnancy and parity were identified as significant determinants of late initiation of ANC.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The prevalence of late initiation of ANC among study population was 56.2%. Almost similar estimates were reported by previous studies done in Myanmar (more than 50%) and Laos (about 60%). However, studies conducted in developed countries revealed lower proportions (4.4% to 27.3% % in USA, about 15% in UK and 41% in Australia) whereas some African studies reported comparable or higher values (53% in Ethiopia, 61.1% in Rwanda, 70.3% in Zambia, 81% in Nigeria, more than 70% in Tanzania and Malawi). 5,16-18,20-25

Utilization of different cut-off points in defining late initiation of ANC could explain these discrepancies (first trimester or 12 completed weeks was used in USA and UK studies, 16 weeks in Ethiopian, Zambian, Tanzanian and Malawi studies, and second/third trimester in some studies).<sup>5,16-20,22,24,25</sup> The proportions of pregnant women who initiate ANC before 4 months of gestation among neighboring and ASEAN countries were 40.4% in Bangladesh, 32.2% in Cambodia, 56.9% in India, 78.6% in Indonesia, 37.5% in Nepal, 46.9% in Pakistan, 56.1% in the Philippines and 65% in Vietnam.<sup>26</sup> Differences in culture or socioeconomic status or health knowledge including awareness on the importance of early booking for ANC or education level among study populations, or differences in time of study or study area whether urban or rural may also be responsible.

In this study mean gestational age at the time of first ANC was 18.23±4.98 weeks. A study done in Ethiopia also reported almost similar result (17.7 weeks).<sup>27</sup> However, a previous study conducted in Myanmar reported much lower gestational age at first ANC (15 weeks) while those detected in Ethiopian and Tanzanian studies were more than 20 weeks.<sup>14,18,24</sup> These discrepancies may be due to differences in time or site of study or differences in education and/or socioeconomic status among study population. Difference in culture or level of awareness on the significance of early initiation of ANC could explain these variations.

Education status of pregnant women, parity, being planned pregnancy, residence whether urban or rural and husband's occupation were identified as significant determinants of late ANC in the present study. This is consistent with findings of previous studies carried out in different countries. Independent studies conducted in USA and some African countries reported that there is significant relationship between late ANC and being planned pregnancy. 16-18,22,28 Parity is also reported as a significant predictor of late initiation of ANC in studies done in UK,<sup>20</sup> Zambia,<sup>17</sup> Rwanda<sup>22</sup> and Ethiopia.<sup>28</sup> Besides, similar studies conducted in USA and Malawi revealed that maternal education has significant effect on receiving late ANC. 16,25 These findings highlight that obstetric characteristics such as parity and being planned pregnancy, and maternal education are important in preventing late initiation of ANC among pregnant mothers.

The present study is not free from limitations that should be considered while interpreting the results. This study was carried out in a government hospital. Pregnant women who received ANC at health centers and private clinics or hospitals were not included in the study. Besides, gestational age at first ANC was determined, based on self-report of LMP. Assessment of gestational age using ultrasound scan was not performed. The study could have been strengthened further by increasing sample size and expanding study sites.

## **CONCLUSION**

Late ANC attendance is high in the study area. Hence, it is important to provide health education on the timing of ANC among women within reproductive ages. Priority should be given to women with low level of education, multiparous women, women with unplanned pregnancies and urban dwellers. Community awareness on the significance of early initiation of ANC should also be raised. Family planning or birth spacing program should be enhanced to prevent unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. Future research should focus on effective interventions to encourage and enable pregnant mothers to engage with the ANC services early, especially during first trimester. Similar study that is community-based with larger sample size should also be conducted.

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