

## Association of Thrombocytopenia with Microcytic and Macrocytic Anemia in Pregnant Women

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** To find out association of Thrombocytopenia with Microcytic and Macrocytic Anemia in pregnant women.

**Background:** Thrombocytopenia is defined as platelet count less than  $150,000/\text{mm}^3$ . It is a second common hematological disorder in pregnancy, anemia being the most common. The exact mechanism of Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA) and Thrombocytopenia is not well understood. The present study was planned to evaluate the effect of anemia on platelet count and functions.

**Methodology:** This was a cross-sectional, observational study conducted from 2019-2021 in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, with the collaboration of Department of Pathology, JNMC, AMU, Aligarh (U.P) on 360 pregnant women at 26-32 weeks of gestation.

Complete Blood Count (CBC) and Red cell indices were calculated by Automated Haematology (H3D Premier Diagonova) Analyzer. Type of anemia was determined on the basis of General Blood Smear and on indices. All the qualitative variables were analyzed using Pearson's Chi-square test while all quantitative variables were analyzed using independent sample test and Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test.

**Results:** The prevalence of Thrombocytopenia in Iron Deficiency Anemia was 57.97%, in Megaloblastic Anemia it was only 18.92% and in Dimorphic it was 70.10%. The association was highest in the cases of Dimorphic Anemia and lowest in the cases of Megaloblastic Anemia while only 15% of control were having Thrombocytopenia in the present study. This

difference in prevalence among cases and control was statistically significant.

**Conclusion:** An association exists between haemoglobin and platelet count. Dimorphic Anemia is commonest form of anemia during pregnancy. Further studies need to be conducted for confirming the association of Anemia with Thrombocytopenia.

**Keywords:** Anemia, Microcytic, Macrocytic, Thrombocytopenia, Pregnant women.

### Introduction

Platelets were discovered by an Italian Pathologist Giulio Bizz zero in the year 1882. Platelets are disc-shaped a nuclear cell fragment that are shed from megakaryocytes in the bone marrow into the blood stream. They play a critical role in haemostasis by forming the primary plug that initially seals vascular defects and by providing a surface that binds and concentrates activated coagulation factors [1]. Thrombocytopenia is defined as platelet count less than  $150,000/\text{mm}^3$  [2].

The association of anemia with Thrombocytosis has been known for over 70 years but its etiology has not been clearly understood [3]. However, reports of Thrombocytopenia associated with iron deficiency anaemia have served to confuse the issue [4, 5]. Normal platelet count has also been reported [5-8].

The following hypothesis has been suggested by Karp Atkin et al. for the maintenance of platelet count at steady-state levels and for the changes leading to reactive Thrombocytosis [9]. According to them, Iron either directly or indirectly inhibits the rise in platelet count above steady-state levels via some inhibitory mechanisms, possibly against Thrombopoietin, their hypothesis also considered that iron is required for the synthesis or production of an integral portion of the

platelet [9]. Iron deficiency anemia is commonly associated with Thrombocytosis; however cases of Thrombocytopenia have been reported. The first case of iron deficiency associated thrombocytopenia in literature was reported in 1964 by Gross et al. Moderate Erythropoietin stimulation, i.e. that produced by standard doses of Recombinant Human Erythropoietin short-term hypoxia or moderate iron deficiency causes a moderate elevation of platelet counts, whereas intense Erythropoietin stimulation, as produced by high doses of Recombinant Human Erythropoietin, prolonged hypoxia or severe iron deficiency, causes some degree of Thrombocytopenia [17]. The exact mechanism of Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA) and Thrombocytopenia is not well understood. Apar Kishor Ganti et al. suggested that it may be related to the alteration in the activity of iron-dependent enzymes in thrombo- and leucopoiesis [18].

A thorough literature search was conducted on med line with search parameters “anemia AND thrombocytopenia AND pregnancy” using the boolean word “AND” on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022. It showed 1250 results.

There is scarcity of literature on association between Anemia and Thrombocytopenia. PubMed mostly revealed case reports and case series with only a few studies related to our topic. It is pertinent to mention here that most of the studies have been conducted on Paediatric age group. Literature search with the keyword's anemia, Thrombocytopenia and pregnancy revealed study on prevalence of Thrombocytopenia in pregnancy, causes of thrombocytopenia in pregnancy and incidence of anemia in the cases of Thrombocytopenia. Therefore, the present study is planned to evaluate the effect of anemia on platelet count and functions.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted after taking informed consent from the patients in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, with the collaboration of Department of Pathology, JNMC, AMU, Aligarh (U.P). It was a cross-sectional, observational study, conducted in 2019-2021. The details of the patients were noted in pre-designed Proforma. A total number of 360 pregnant women at 26-32 weeks of gestation were enrolled. Lost to follow up were 40 and remaining 320 were contributed by 20 control and 300 cases.

### Inclusion Criteria

was Pregnant women at 26 to 32 weeks of gestation.

### Exclusion Criteria

was Fever (>100 F), Known case of dengue, Any other viral infection like HCV, Pregnancy induced hypertension, Malaria, Idiopathic Thrombocytopenia of pregnancy, History of any drug intake which affects platelet counts (Aspirin, Warfarin).

### Procedure methodology

### Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Groups	Age			Mean Gestational Age	Area of Residence		of Literacy Status		Socio-Economic Status				
	20-25Year (%)	26-30Year (%)	31-35Year (%)		Gestational Age	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Literate	Illiterate	Upper	Upper-Middle	Lower-Middle	Upper-Lower
				Mean ± SD									
Group-A	20.29	72.46	7.25	29.04±3.05	91.30	8.70	81.16	18.84	1.45	30.97	56.52	28.99	4.35
Group-B	21.62	59.46	18.92	30.49±1.03	81.08	18.92	67.57	32.43	0.00	21.62	40.54	18.92	18.92
Group-C	9.79	87.63	2.58	29.02±3.61	96.39	3.61	75.77	24.23	2.06	1.03	77.32	18.04	1.55
Group-D	25.00	60.00	15.00	29.58±2.00	75.00	25.00	90.00	10.00	25.00	60.00	15.00	0.00	0.00

Both the Cases and Control were comparable for age, gestational age, literacy status and area of residence as age of study group in our study was between 20-35 year

Hb%, Platelet counts MCV, MCH, MCHC, TLC, DLC, GBP, BT CT, RFT, LFT, HBsAg, HCV, HIV, DENGUE(IgM), PTINR, MPQBC/MP smear was performed and divided the patients into four groups:

Group-A: Microcytic Anemia with Thrombocytopenia, Group-B: Macrocytic Anaemia with Thrombocytopenia, Group-C: Dimorphic Anemia with Thrombocytopenia & Group-D: Control.

The above cited Groups were provided appropriate treatment depending on the type of anemia. Response of therapy seen after 4 to 6 weeks (by Hemogram & General Blood Picture). Hemogram and GBP were done at term or in labour. Hemogram and GBP were repeated after 48 hours of delivery. Statistical analysis was done using Pearson's Chi-square test while all quantitative variables were analyzed using independent sample test and Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test.

All the tests were performed using computer programme i.e., SPSS version 25.0.

with majority of Cases and Control belonging to 26-30-year age group.

Mean gestational age was  $29.04 \pm 3.05$ ,  $30.49 \pm 1.03$ ,  $29.02 \pm 3.61$  in Group-A, Group-B and Group-C. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean gestational age in all groups i. e, comparable.

Maximum number of cases and controls were literate and belong to urban locality. However, there was

difference in socio- economic status of the Cases and the Controls. Maximum number of cases was from lower middleclass while maximum Control was from upper middle class. The results were significant.

Table 2: Prevalence of Thrombocytopenia among four study groups.

S. N	Groups	Thrombocytopenia						Ch <sup>2</sup> -Value	p-Value
		Yes		No		Total			
		No. of Cases	(%)	No. of Cases	(%)	No. of Cases	(%)		
1	Group A(n=69)	40	57.97	29	42.03	69	100	50.084	p<0.001
2	Group B(n=37)	7	18.92	30	81.08	37	100		
3	Group C(n=194)	136	70.10	58	29.90	194	100		
4	Group D(n=20)	3	15.00	17	85.00	20	100		

Thrombocytopenia was present in 70.1% cases in Group-C and 57.97% in Group-A. This difference of prevalence of thrombocytopenia among the study groups was statistically significant.

Table 3: Comparison of mean hemoglobin before and after therapy according to severity of anaemia in study population.

Groups	Severity	Before therapy	After therapy	t-Value	p- Value
Group A	Mild	10.90±3.48	10.88±3.44	-0.015	p >0.05
	Moderate	9.99 ±4.02	10.00±4.58	0.004	p >0.05
	Severe	7.01 ±4.52	7.00 ±3.58	-0.008	p >0.05
Group B	Mild	10.71±4.29	10.80±5.89	0.028	p >0.05
	Moderate	9.95 ±4.98	10.10±4.56	0.031	p >0.05
	Severe	6.99 ±3.25	7.01 ±3.59	0.006	p >0.05
Group C	Mild	10.71±4.92	10.72±5.58	0.008	p >0.05
	Moderate	9.92 ±5.02	9.81 ±4.23	-0.063	p >0.05
	Severe	7.10 ±4.34	7.00 ±4.85	-0.144	p >0.05

Mean rise in hemoglobin after appropriate therapy in Microcytic, Macrocytic, and Dimorphic groups is statistically non-significant.

Table 4: Comparison of mean platelet count and after therapy according to severity of anemia in study population.

Groups	Severity	Before therapy	After therapy	t-Value	p-Value
Group-A	Mild	1.50 ± 0.98	1.56 ± 0.56	0.192	p >0.05
	Moderate	1.01 ± 0.54	1.02 ± 0.39	0.04	p >0.05
	Severe	0.50 ± 0.21	0.51 ± 0.19	0.158	p >0.05
Group-B	Mild	1.51 ± 1.98	1.71 ± 1.89	0.163	p >0.05
	Moderate	0.98 ± 0.48	1.20 ± 0.99	0.283	p >0.05
	Severe	0.51 ± 0.35	0.56 ± 0.45	0.124	p >0.05

Group-C	Mild	1.52 ± 0.86	1.54 ± 0.92	0.093	p > 0.05
	Moderate	0.99 ± 0.82	1.21 ± 0.99	0.64	p > 0.05
	Severe	0.34 ± 0.08	0.51 ± 0.19	7.736	p < 0.001

Mean rise in platelet count after therapy in Dimorphic anemia with thrombocytopenia in severe group is statistically significant (p<0.001).

Table 5: Mean hemoglobin and platelet counts at term or in labour.

Sn.	Groups	Mean ± SD				
		Hb	Platelet	MCV	MCH	MCHC
1	Group-A	9.84±0.65	2.09±0.41	87.24±10.19	30.19±1.49	32.23±1.87
2	Group-B	9.91±0.84	2.04±0.23	87.21±9.68	29.29±1.09	30.83±2.02
3	Group-C	10.19±5.16	2.52±6.47	87.11±10.85	30.86±2.44	32.21±2.00
4	Group-D	11.91±0.56	2.36±0.24	95.13±2.72	30.69±1.23	32.83±1.30
5	F-Value	1.149	0.099	3.703	2.3	1.867
6	p-Value	p>0.05	p>0.05	p<0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05

Mean hemoglobin at term or in labour was 9.84 ± 0.65 in Group A, 9.91±0.84 in Group B, 10.19±5.16 in Group C and 11.91±0.56 in Group D, this difference was statistically non-significant.

Table 6: Mean hemoglobin and platelet count after 48 hours of delivery.

Groups	Mean ± SD				
	Hb	Platelet	MCV	MCH	MCHC
Group-A	9.88±0.83	2.16±0.30	88.95±10.03	30.89±1.78	32.92±2.06
Group-B	10.06±0.76	2.04±0.26	89.66±8.14	30.70±2.00	32.34±1.58
Group-C	10.88±8.53	2.23±0.39	88.88±7.90	32.04±7.14	32.89±1.91
Group-D	11.82±0.47	2.27±0.20	93.86±3.09	30.23±1.34	32.09±1.40
F-Value	0.449	1.194	2.3	0.964	1.276
p-Value	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05

Mean hemoglobin in Group A after 48 hours of delivery was 9.88 ± 0.83, in Group-B it was 10.06±0.76, in Group-C it was 10.88±8.53 and in Group-D it was 11.82 ± 0.47,

this difference among the Cases and the Control after 48 hours of delivery in mean hemoglobin and mean platelet count was statistically non-significant.

Table 7: Mean VitaminB<sub>12</sub> level in the cases.

Groups	B12	F-Value	p-Value
	Mean ± SD		
Group-A	812.12±216.25	126.158	p<0.001
Group-B	350.00±52.23		
Group-C	352.70±227.02		

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> level was found 812.12±216.25, 350.00±52.23 and 352.70±227.02 in Group A, Group B

and Group C respectively, this difference was statistically significant.

Table 8: Mean Folic Acid level in the cases.

Groups	Folic Acid	F-Value	p-Value
	Mean ± SD		
Group-A	17.41±8.4	0.157	p>0.05
Group-B	20.60±0.00		
Group-C	16.00±10.15		

The mean folic acid level was 17.41±8.40, 20.60±0.00 and 16.00±10.15 in Group- A, Group-B and Group-C (respectively). This difference was statistically non-significant.

**Discussion**

Thrombocytopenia, defined as a platelet count less than 150,000/mm<sup>3</sup>, is the second most common Haematological abnormality in pregnancy after anemia, occurring in up to 6-10% of pregnancies [20, 21, 22]. Platelet counts less than 100,000/mm<sup>3</sup> are less common and are observed in less than 1% of pregnancies [23]

Most cases of thrombocytopenia in pregnancy are mild and have no adverse outcome for mother or fetus, moderate to severe thrombocytopenia may lead to bleeding during delivery and occasional cases may be related to a life-threatening systemic disorder such as thrombotic micro angiopathy [24]. The first case of iron deficiency-associated thrombocytopenia in the literature was reported in 1964 by Gross et al. [25]. We found limited studies similar to ours on association between Anemia and Thrombocytopenia in literature.

Age of study group in our study was between 20 & 35 year. Majority of Cases and Control belong to 26-30 year i.e., in both the Cases and the Control group age was comparable and the results were found to be statistically significant (p<0.001). Our observations were different with the studies conducted on prevalence of thrombocytopenia among pregnant women by Sumaya Elgodwi et al. [26] (2021) as they concluded that

maximum patients in their study were in the age group of 40-49 years old and also in that study they concluded that Thrombocytopenia increased with increasing age. Our study was also contradictory with Mbanaya et al. (2007), SHO reported that pregnant women with thrombocytopenia were aged from 15-40 years [27]. Al Kouatly et al. (2003) found that mean maternal age of Thrombocytopenic pregnant women was 34.3 ±5.4 years [28]. Also, Parnas et al. (2006) reported that pregnant women with thrombocytopenia were significantly older compared with pregnant women without Thrombocytopenia [29].

In our study we found findings contradictory to the above studies. There was no correlation of Thrombocytopenia with increasing age. The finding may be because most of the pregnant women in our study were of a younger age group and had anemia which could be the confounding factor while other authors were studying only the prevalence of thrombocytopenia in pregnancy unrelated to anemia.

In present study mean gestational age was 29.04±3.05, 30.49±1.03, 29.02±3.61 in Group-A, Group-B and Group-C (respectively). There was no statistically significant difference in the mean gestational age in all groups. It was comparable among all groups which were related to our inclusion criteria. Sumaya Elgodwi et al. (2021) found that the prevalence of moderate Thrombocytopenia increased with increasing gestational age [26]. Fikir, Bamlaku, Zegeye (2017) showed that there was no association between the trimester and thrombocytopenia [30].

In present study, maximum number of the Cases and Controls were from urban locality, the results were statistically significant (p<0.001). Fikir, Bamlaku, Zegeye (2017) concluded from their study on prevalence

of thrombocytopenia in pregnancy conducted in Ethiopia that thrombocytopenia was higher among pregnant women in patients from rural areas [30]. In an Indian study by Jeetendra et al. [31] (2017) on prevalence of anemia, the authors reported higher prevalence of anemia urban areas similar to our study but they also reported that severe anemia is more prevalent in rural areas in India but this was not so in our study. Urban population is expected to be more aware about antenatal checkups and easier access to a health care setting but it was not found to be so in our study. Only 20 patients out of 300 women in our study belonged to rural areas. The reason for this could be that it was conducted during the COVID period which affected the delivery of RMNCH services and frequent lockdowns prevented patients from peripheral areas from reaching health care facilities.

In present study maximum number of cases and control were literate, which were statistically non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). It was surprising to find the high prevalence of anemia in a literate population. Similar findings have been reported by other authors. Ali Eram et al. (2017) reported that in their study all women with anemia were literate [32].

Present study shows that the maximum number of the Cases having thrombocytopenia were from lower middle class according to modified Kuppuswamy scale while maximum Control were from upper middle class and the results were significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Both Sumaya Elgodwi et al. (2021) and Fikir, Bamlaku, Zegeye (2017) did not report on the socio-economic status of their study population [26, 30].

The socio-economic status correlates with nutritional status and access to antenatal care and this was the reason why most of our cases of anemia belonged to a lower middle-class stratum.

Only 4.35%, 18.92% and 1.55% cases in each group were from lower class. This is surprising as our center caters to a wide area but the reason could be that our study was conducted during the COVID period when lockdowns and loss of work for daily wagers. Women from lower class were not seeking antenatal or emergency obstetric care during this period.

Prevalence of thrombocytopenia in Anemia: In the present study table-7 shows that the prevalence of thrombocytopenia in iron deficiency anemia was 57.97%, in Megaloblastic anemia it was only 18.92% and in Dimorphic anemia, it was 70.10%. The association was highest in cases of dimorphic anemia and lowest in cases of megaloblastic anemia. This was statistically significant.

In a study by Tabinda Ijaz et al. 2016 in Lahore, the prevalence of anemia and thrombocytopenia was reported as 70.5% & 16.5% (respectively). However, they did not attempt to co-relate the two conditions [33]. However, Fikir, Bamlaku, Zegeye (2017) found 8.8% prevalence of thrombocytopenia in pregnant women in North-West Ethiopia while Sumaya Elgodwi et al. (2021) found 18% prevalence of thrombocytopenia among pregnant women in Tripoli region [26, 30]. However, both the studies were different from the only studied the prevalence of thrombocytopenia. Sumaya et al. studied the various conditions associated in thrombocytopenia and found that anemia was present in 96 patients (31%) out of 312 thrombocytopenic pregnant patients [26].

We have studied the prevalence of thrombocytopenia in cases of anemia and found a prevalence of 60%. The results corroborate the finding of Mbanya et al. (2007) who reported that the major factor associated with

thrombocytopenia was anemia among pregnant women in Cameroon [27].

In present study after giving therapy according to type of anemia, we found statistically non-significant rise in haemoglobin and platelet counts among study groups. In Dimorphic group with severe anemia, correction of anemia resulted in significant rise in platelets ( $p < 0.001$ ). Non-significant rise in mean platelet counts after iron therapy, may be due to the fact Erythropoietin shares same structural features with thrombopoietin. The levels of endogenous erythropoietin initially significantly decrease during the correction of iron deficiency. This reduction in endogenous erythropoietin might decrease the productivity of megakaryocytes and lead to transient thrombocytopenia which is known as iron therapy induced thrombocytopenia. Akan H, Güven N, Aydogdu I, Arat M, Beksaç M, Dalva K (2000). [34]. Various case reports and case series have correlated iron deficiency anemia and thrombocytopenia. Van K. et al. (2010) reported a case series of four paediatric age group patients in all the four cases hemoglobin and platelet counts normalized within 1 to 3 weeks of iron supplementation [35]. Nataly, Calvo, Pak (2018) also reported a case of a 30 year non pregnant female whose low platelet count responded on iron therapy [15]. Ramy et al. (2012) also report a case of non-pregnant 40-year female whose thrombocytopenia improved on treating severe anemia with blood and iron [36].

Mahmoud, Al-Tikrity, Babikikir, Yassin (2020) also report a case of severe anemia 32 year non pregnant female along with thrombocytopenia, her platelet count improved on injectable iron [37]. Tessa et al (2019) also conducted a study to correlate anemia with Thrombocytopenia but on non-pregnant patients [38]. Their study was a case control study, which showed an

increase in mean platelet count on correcting severe iron deficiency. Vaibhav et al. (2015) analyzed the relationship between severe anemia and Thrombocytopenia, they also found that all thrombocytopenic patients respond rapidly on an anemia therapy [39]. Faisal, Shridhar, Samprathi and Vemgal (2021) also reported correlation of severe iron deficiency anemia with thrombocytopenia, but these case reports were also in paediatric age group [40]. All the above case report and case series were conducted either on paediatric age group or on non-pregnant population, so differ from our study.

Mean Hb and platelet count during labour and after 48 hours of delivery: The mean platelet count normalized as pregnancy reached term or in labour and 48 hours, and mean platelet count was normal after 2 days of delivery. Red cell indices, however did not improve as they take 4 to 12 weeks to get normalized [41].

The mean vitamin B<sub>12</sub> level was low in the three study groups (cases) including Iron Deficiency Anemia group but the deficiency was most marked in dimorphic and macrocytic group. In present study Megaloblastic anemia was associated with thrombocytopenia, this finding was comparable to study conducted by Raj Laxmi Birur Rajashekar et al (2017) but the study was conducted on non-pregnant patients which is different from our study population [14]. In contradictory to above studies Moghadam, Sand Ghor Bani, M. (2016) reported a case of a 33-year-old pregnant woman, who was having megaloblastic anemia and severe thrombocytopenia. After managing her megaloblastic anemia, her platelet count did not change [42].

The mean folic acid level was low in all three study groups, but was normal in megaloblastic anemia. Though both folic acid and B<sub>12</sub> deficiency is implicated

in megaloblastic anemia but deficiency of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> was found to be more common than folic acid deficiency in our study. Wintrob's Clinical Hematology also mentions that B<sub>12</sub> deficiency is more commonly associated with megaloblastic anemia [43].

### Conclusions

It can be concluded that both anemia and Thrombocytopenia disorders in pregnancy are common even among literate younger pregnant women living in urban locality who come from lower-middle socio-economic strata. Dimorphic anemia is the commonest form of anemia during pregnancy. It can also be concluded that there is an association that exists between haemoglobin and platelet count.

In order to reduce maternal and neonatal morbidities, careful surveillance is required of all pregnancies for early detection and treatment of anemia. Type of anemia should be investigated before therapy. Further studies to be conducted for confirming the association of anemia with thrombocytopenia.

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