

Pregnant women's awareness of infectious diseases

A study to assess pregnant women's understanding of Toxoplasmosis, Listeriosis and Cytomegalovirus
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Introduction

Toxoplasmosis, listeriosis and cytomegalovirus can negatively affect pregnancy outcomes and can easily be prevented by precautionary behaviour of pregnant women.

Objective

To gain insight in pregnant women's understanding about the transmission routes of toxoplasmosis, listeriosis and cytomegalovirus; and about women's knowledge of methods to prevent these infections.

Methods

During three months, all pregnant women who participated in a large scale national survey on primary care midwifery (Deliver-study) were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Per infectious diseases, a sum score was calculated of the number of correct answered questions about the preventive methods. Pregnant women who had never heard or read information about the disease, automatically had a score of zero.

Table 1 Knowledge about methods to prevent infectious diseases

Methods to prevent:	Correct answer N (%)	
Listeriosis	- avoiding deli meats and soft cheeses (true)	547 (51.6)
	- thoroughly reheating all leftover foods and "ready-to-eat" foods (true)	382 (36.2)
	- eating only properly pasteurized dairy products (true)	528 (49.9)
	- avoiding areas where ticks live (false)	268 (25.4)
Toxoplasmosis	- removing pet reptiles from your home (false)	185 (17.6)
	- feeding your cat dry or commercial cat food and not letting it kill and eat rodents (true)	117 (11.1)
	- avoid wild cats (true)	375 (35.7)
	- letting someone else change the cat's litter box (true)	728 (68.7)
	- taking a vitamin supplement regularly (false)	454 (43.3)
	- cooking meat well until no pink is seen and the juices run clear (true)	442 (42.0)
	- thoroughly washing and/or peeling fruits and vegetables before eating them (true)	443 (41.8)
	- washing your hands, cutting boards and utensils thoroughly (true)	457 (43.4)
- gardening with gloves (true)	701 (66.2)	
Cytomegalovirus	- hand washing after diaper change (true)	59 (5.6)
	- not cleaning the cat's litter box (false)	54 (5.1)
	- not sharing bath towels with children (true)	43 (4.1)
	- not sharing the same drinking glass, utensils or toothbrush with children (true)	65 (6.1)
	- not kissing a child on or near the mouth (true)	57 (5.4)

* Correct answer between brackets

Conclusion

The knowledge about toxoplasmosis and listeriosis was moderate to high, but knowledge regarding CMV was low. Information about preventive infectious diseases is still important, while women were not aware of important preventive methods

Figure 1. Toxoplasmosis knowledge score

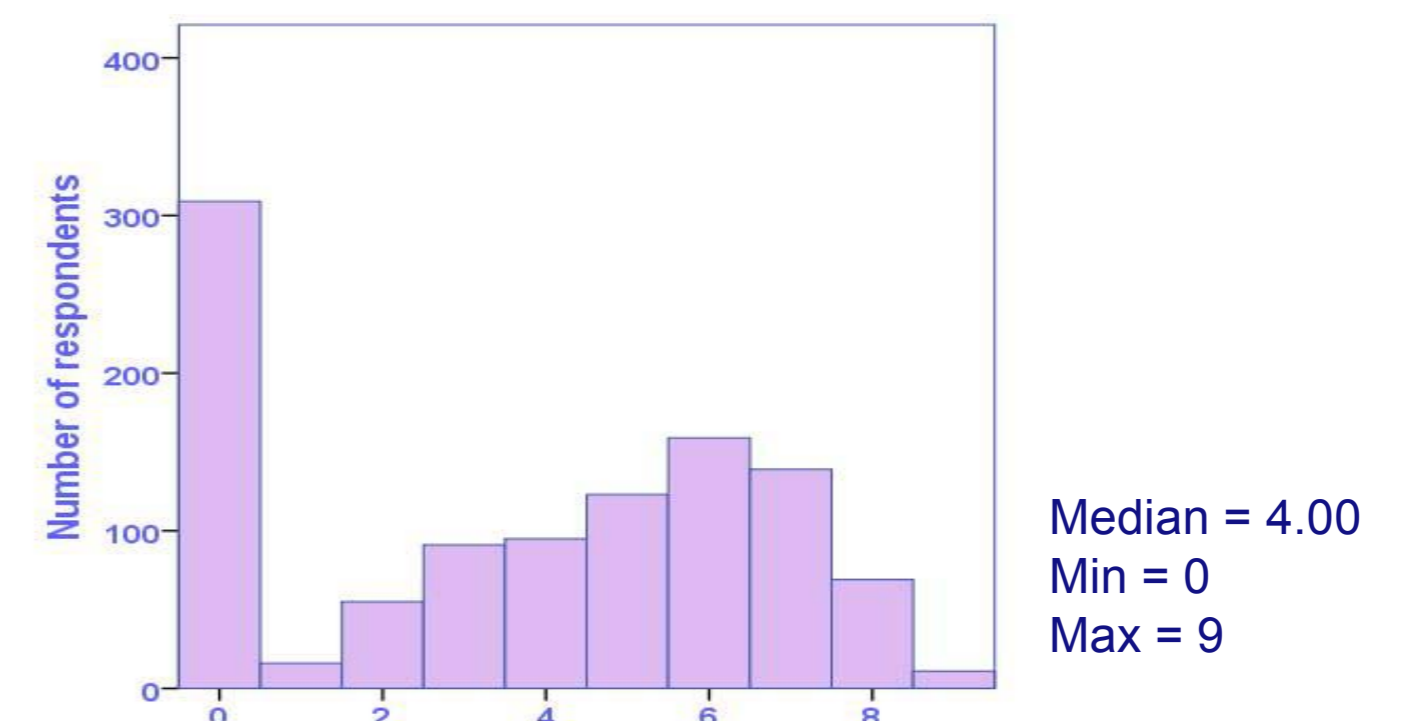


Figure 2. Listeriosis knowledge score

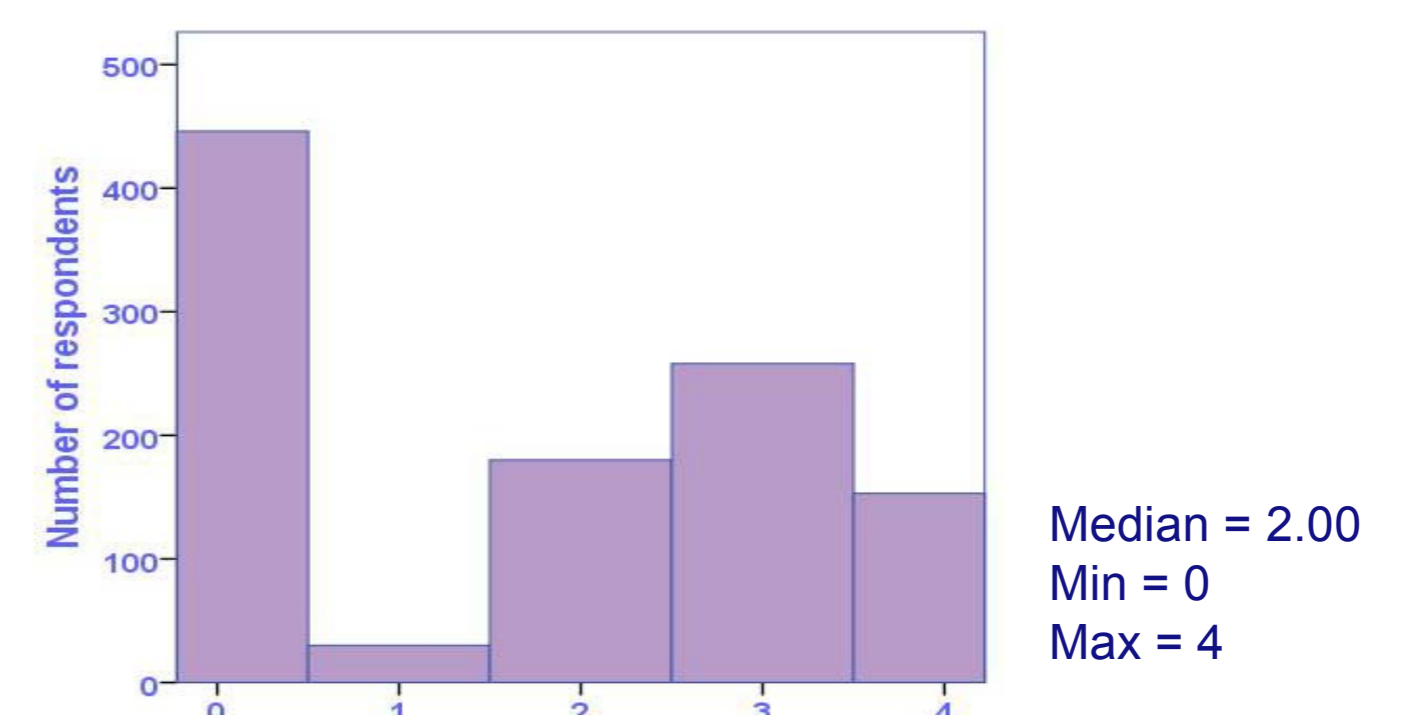
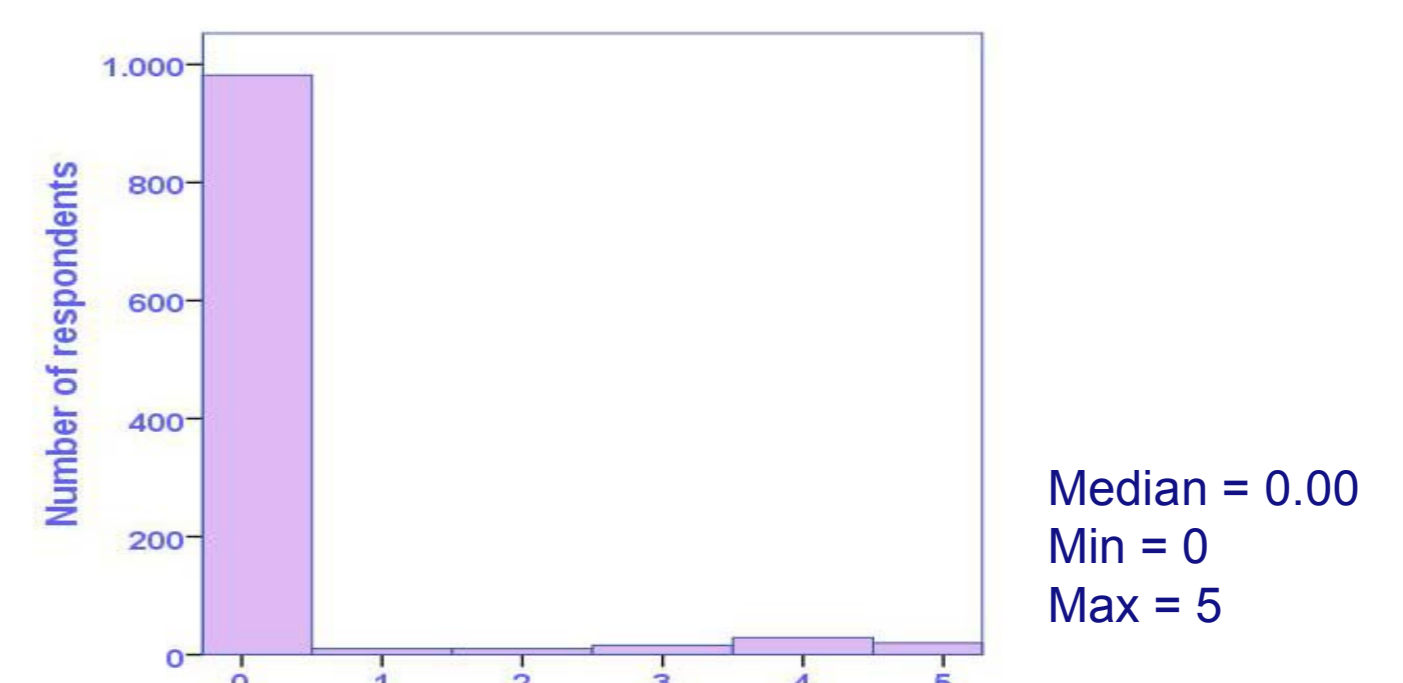


Figure 3. Cytomegalovirus knowledge score



Results

- 1067 (62.1%) pregnant women completed the questionnaire.
- Respondents were between 17 and 42 years old (mean 30 years); women with the Dutch nationality and highly-educated women were overrepresented.
- 76% had heard, read or seen information about toxoplasmosis, 62% about listeriosis, 12% about cytomegalovirus.
- 11.8% of the women did not know they should cook meat well to avoid toxoplasmosis.