THE PREVALENCE OF ANEMIA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN CHINA: EVIDENCE FROM THE CHINA HEALTH AND NUTRITION SURVEY

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Abstract. Although China has experienced rapid economic growth over the past few decades, significant health and nutritional problems remain. Little work has been done to track basic diseases, such as iron-deficiency anemia, so the exact prevalence of these health problems is unknown. The goals of this study were to assess the prevalence of anemia in China and identify individual, household and community-based factors associated with anemia. We used data from the 2009 China Health and Nutrition Survey (CHNS), including the measurement of hemoglobin levels among 7,261 individuals from 170 communities and 7 provinces in central and eastern China. The overall prevalence of anemia was 13.4\% using the WHO’s blood hemoglobin thresholds (1968). This means in China’s more developed central and eastern regions up to 180 million people may be anemic. Some vulnerable subgroups were disproportionately affected by anemia. Seniors (aged 60 years and above) were more likely to be anemic than younger age cohorts, and females had higher anemia prevalence among all age groups except among children aged 7 to 14 years. We found a negative correlation between household wealth and the presence of anemia, suggesting anemia prevalence may decline as China’s economy grows. However, the prevalence of anemia was greater in migrant households, which should be experiencing an improved economic status.

Keywords: malnutrition, anemia, prevalence, rural health, urban health, China