PREVALENCE OF ASYMPTOMATIC MALARIA PARASITEMIA IN LABOR IN FEDERAL TEACHING HOSPITAL ABAKALIKI NIGERIA
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Background:
Asymptomatic malaria parasitemia constitutes a menace in malaria endemic areas and had contributed directly or indirectly to maternal morbidity and mortality in developing countries especially in Nigeria. It has been reported that this can be prevented.

Objective:
This study is aimed at determining the prevalence of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia in labor in Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki.

Method:
This was a prospective cross-sectional study conducted in the labor ward complex of the Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki over a period of three months from March to May 2012. Two hundred and fifty unbooked women presenting in labor at term and willing to participate were consecutively recruited. A structured data sheet was administered to each parturient. Thick and thin blood films were prepared to identify malaria parasites.

Result:
A total of 250 unbooked parturients participated in the study. The mean age of parturients was 28.2±7.2 years. Thirty two parturients were aged 19 years or less, 131 parturients were aged between 20-29 years, 65 were aged between 30-39 years and 22 were aged between 40-49 years. One hundred and seven were primigravid, 111 were between para 1-4 while 32 were para 5 and above. Majority of the parturients (236) were of low socio-economic class. The prevalence of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia was 77.6%.

Conclusion:
There was high prevalence of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia in the study group. The association of asymptomatic malaria parasitemia with parity was significant.

KEY WORDS
Asymptomatic malaria parasitemia, unbooked parturients, Abakaliki, Nigeria