

Health literacy as a predictor for the production of health inequalities? Potentials for analysis within a social epidemiological birth cohort: The BaBi-Study

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Background

- About 50% of the population in Europe have limited health literacy (HL) skills (1).
- Higher percentage among migrants, elderly and people with low socioeconomic status (SES).
- Children depend on parents' ability to assess, understand, appraise and apply health information: advanced reading & cognitive skills required (2).

Hypothesis: Low parental HL partly explains adverse association between both, low SES and migrant background on one hand, and child health on the other.

Objective: To present possibilities and restrictions for investigating the effect of parental HL on child health in a birth cohort study.

Methods

The BaBi-Study is a population-based birth cohort study with follow-up until school entry.

Sample size: 1,500 mother- and child pairs

Enrollment period: 2013 - 2016

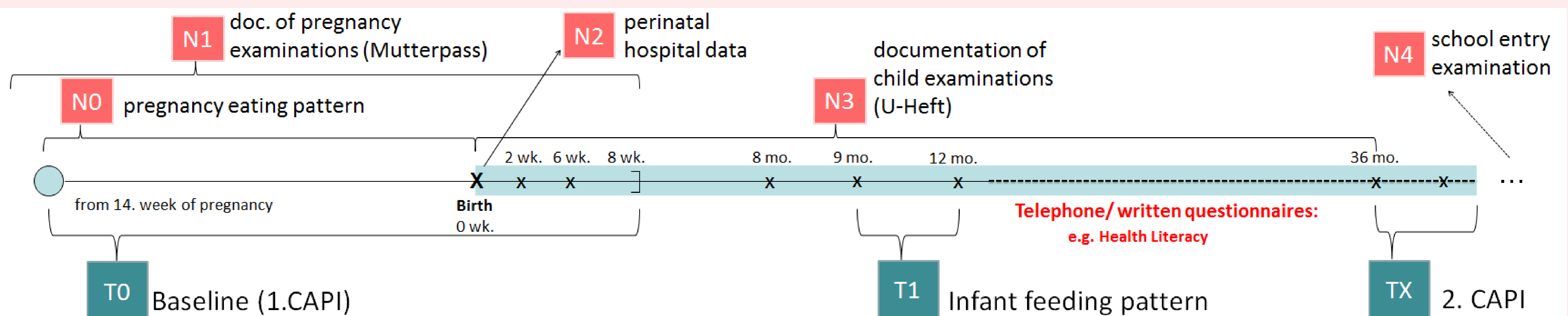
Data collection: personal interviews (CAPI), contextual and administrative data, etc. (see Fig.1)

Aim: disentangling development of health inequalities

- social, cultural and contextual influences on child health
- physical and cognitive development, asthma/allergy sensitization and use of health care services

Languages: German, Turkish, Russian, Polish

Fig. 1: Timeline of the BaBi-Study



Results

- So far, no validated instruments for measuring parental HL in birth cohorts are available.
- Existing HL instruments are mostly designed for clinical settings as screening tools to identify patients with difficulty understanding medical information.
- Parental HL was not assessed in the baseline questionnaire of the study (1st CAPI).
- There are potentials for assessing parental HL in the follow-up period and within additional nested studies.

Conclusion

Development of new tools is necessary for measuring parental HL in birth cohort studies.

Assessing HL in a birth cohort would allow analysing its influence on child health in a prospective way and establish causal links. The BaBi-Study will test and adapt existing instruments for measuring HL in further follow-ups of the study population.

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Literature:

- (1) HLS-EU Consortium (2012): Comparative Report of Health Literacy in Eight EU Member States. The European Health Literacy Survey HLS EU
- (2) Sanders et al. (2012): Health literacy and child health promotion: implications for research, clinical care, and public policy. *Pediatrics* 124(3), 306-214