

Women's nutrition: eating habits, nutritional status and main sex-related risk factors in the physiological phases of female life



SILVIA CALLEGARO – silvia.callegaro@unipr.it

Department Of Food and Drug, University of Parma, Parma, Italy
Tutor: Prof. Alice Rosi



AIM OF THE PROJECT

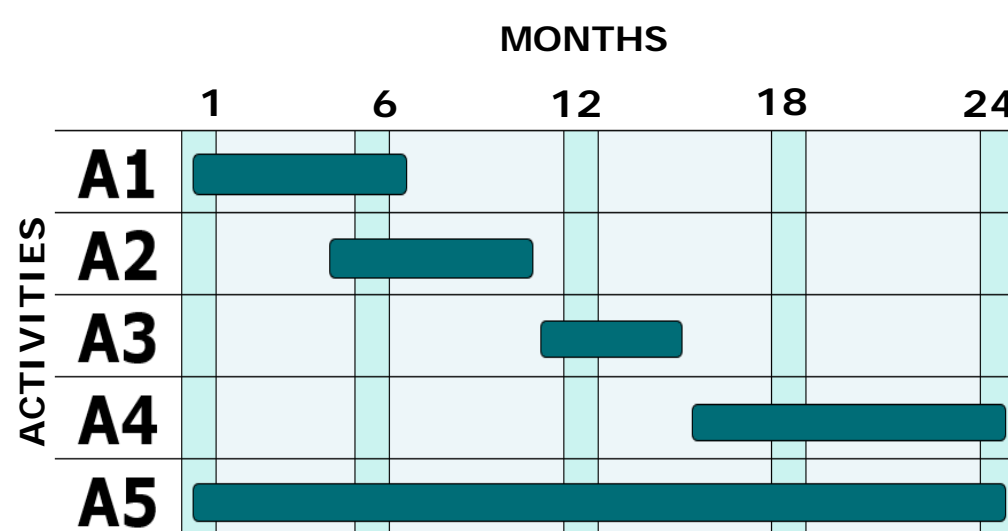
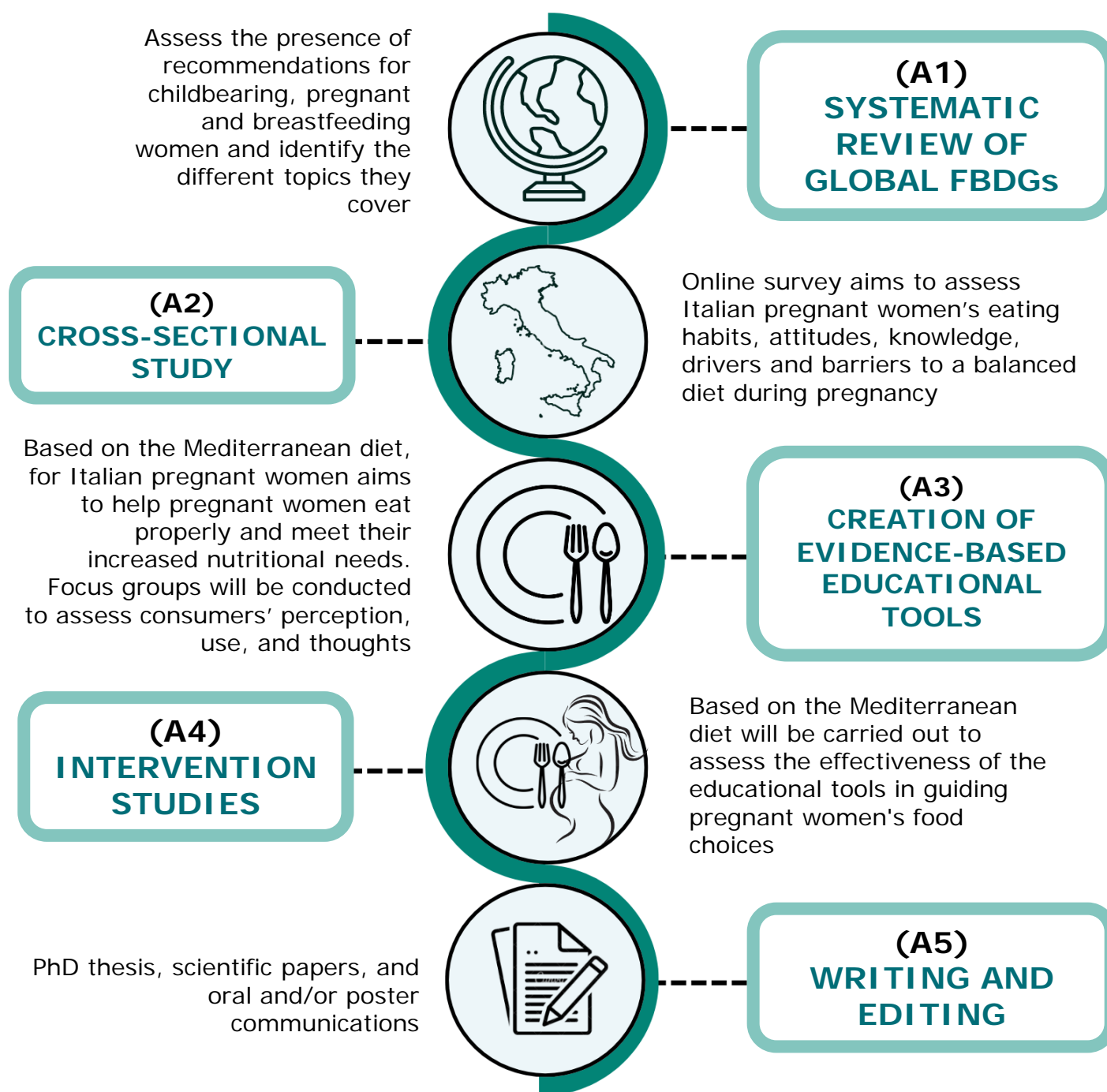
To assess how dietary habits, nutritional status, adherence to the Mediterranean Diet, and nutritional knowledge influence key sex-related nutritional risk factors at major physiological stages of women's lives, such as reproductive age, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause. The data collected will be used to develop evidence-based nutrition education tools for women and to draft nutrition guidelines specific to these women's life stages.

STATE OF ART

Throughout their life, women experience various physiological, neurological, and hormonal changes that result in different nutritional needs.

Today, women's malnutrition, such as undernutrition or overnutrition, is a major global public health problem with challenges that are different from country to country. Worldwide, approximately 170 million women are underweight, 610 million women are affected by overweight, and 520 million women are suffering anemia¹. There is a clear need to translate the different nutritional needs that affect women throughout their lives into policies that prevent nutritional deficiencies and ensure a healthy and sustainable diet, with the aim of promoting a healthy and sustainable lifestyle and minimising the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases². The Mediterranean diet, one of the best known and most studied dietary patterns, has been shown to positively affect women's health throughout the lifecycle. The benefits of the Mediterranean diet during pregnancy have been well-established and are related to a reduction in gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, and foetal growth restriction³. In addition, pregnancy provides a unique opportunity to carry out educational activities aimed at promoting women's health and well-being, as they are highly motivated and have more frequent contact with health professionals during pregnancy⁴. In this context, practical easy-to-understand tools are needed to help pregnant women plan healthy balanced meals able to cover their nutritional needs. Some tools specifically designed for pregnant women are available (e.g. My Pregnancy Plate, Healthy Pregnancy Plate, MyPlate California For Pregnant and New Parents). However, to the best of our knowledge, no Italian tool based on the Mediterranean diet has yet been proposed for pregnant women, or other physiological stages in women's life.

OBJECTIVES AND MILESTONES



REFERENCES

- ¹Victora, C. G., Christian, P., Vdaletti, L. P., et al. (2021). Revisiting maternal and child undernutrition in low-income and middle-income countries: variable progress towards an unfinished agenda. *Lancet*, 397(10282), pp. 1388–1399.
- ²Feskens, E. J. M., Bailey, R., Bhutta, Z., Biesalski, H. K., Eicher-Miller, H., Kramer, K., Pan, W. H., & Griffiths, J. C. (2022). Women's health: optimal nutrition throughout the lifecycle. *European Journal of Nutrition*, 61(Suppl 1), pp. 1–23.
- ³Biagi, C., Nunzio, M. D., Bordoni, A., Gori, D., & Lanari, M. (2019). Effect of Adherence to Mediterranean Diet during Pregnancy on Children's Health: A Systematic Review. *Nutrients*, 11(5), pp. 997.
- ⁴Garbi, M. (2021). National Institute for Health and Care Excellence clinical guidelines development principles and processes.