



THE STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE TOWARDS BREAST FEEDING AMONG LACTATING MOTHERS.

Obstetrics & Gynaecology

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ABSTRACT

AIM: To study the knowledge, attitude and practice towards breast feeding among lactating mothers.

METHODOLOGY: A cross sectional study was conducted in postnatal lactating mothers at Obstetrics department in a tertiary care centre.

RESULTS: Among 250 participants in the study, all were breast feeders. 155 exclusively breastfed, 179 initiated breastfeeding within an hour. The benefits of colostrum were known to 241 out of which 238 had fed their babies with colostrum. 187 knew the contraceptive effect of BF. Many breastfed only on demand of child, 16 gave prelacteal feeds as first feed. 46 bottlefed their child, the major reason being working mothers. 120 had no counselling sessions before BF.

CONCLUSIONS: Efforts by public health workers on BF counselling and health education should be promoted.

KEYWORDS

Exclusive Breast feeding, Health education, Colostrum, KAP

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is the most effective way to ensure child health, survival and helps strengthening the mother child bond.

WHO recommends Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) for the first 6 months of age and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond. Breast milk is natural first food for babies for first 6 months of life and ideal nourishment providing all the nutrients including vitamins and minerals meaning no other liquids including water or food is needed.

Breastmilk carries antibodies from mothers that help to combat the disease and protects infant against infectious and chronic diseases. Early human milk promotes gut maturation and immune activation. It stimulates infant's immune system and response to vaccination.

In mothers breastfeeding has shown to decrease the frequency of hemorrhage, postpartum depression, breast cancer, ovarian and endometrial cancer as well as facilitating weight loss. Lactational amenorrhea method is an important choice for postpartum family planning.

Every year optimal breastfeeding practices can prevent about 1.4 million deaths worldwide among children under 5.

Breastfeeding has declined worldwide in recent years, as a result of urbanization and maternal employment. Although practice of breastfeeding is influenced by various social, cultural and religious beliefs, maternal infant feeding attitude has been shown to be as stronger independent predictor of breastfeeding initiation.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study was conducted for a period of 3 months from Feb 2021 to April 2021 at tertiary care center, Kurnool. All postnatal mothers delivered at obstetrics department were included in the study.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Mothers of healthy neonates who are being breastfed.
- Mothers who are willing to participate in the study.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Mothers of anomalous babies and dead babies
- women who did not give their consent for the study.
- Women with chronic illness like cancers, HIV/HCV.
- The purpose of study was explained to mothers and verbal consent was obtained from those women who agreed to participate in the study.
- The total participants enrolled were 250.
- A face to face interview of study participants was done for collection of data. A predesigned and structured questionnaire was

used.

- It consisted of two parts; first part consists of questions related to information about demographic profile of participants Age, religion type of family, educational and working status, place of delivery and type of delivery. The second part contains questions assessing knowledge, attitude and practices towards breastfeeding among postnatal mothers.
- The questions were asked in local language and the time taken to complete the questionnaire was approximately 20-30 minutes.
- After the completion of interview, all the mothers were informed about the importance of breastmilk and colostrum and significance of breastfeeding.

RESULTS

250 women were studied of whom approximately 181 (72.4%) women were aware that breastfeeding is to be initiated in less than one hour, 238 (95.2%) agreed that colostrum is to be given. 241 (96.4%) knew the importance of colostrum. 243 (97.2%) agreed that breastfeeding improved child immunity and 233 (93.2%) knew it helps in neonatal jaundice, only 92 (36.8%) were aware that EBF is up to six months. 201 (80.4%) knew only breast milk must be given in EBF. 210 (84%) accepted that time to start weaning is more than six months. 243 (97.2%) were aware that proper position and technique is important while breastfeeding. 187 (74.8%) agreed that breastfeeding causes contraceptive effect. 240 (96%) accepted that breastfeeding does not lead to maternal malnourishment. (Table 2)

Majority of mothers 140 (56%) breastfed children on demand. Most of them 212 (84.8%) do not believe in prelacteal feeds. Only 46 (18.4%) felt formula feeding is preferred to breastfeeding. Almost 234 (93.6%) women maintained personal hygiene while breastfeeding. 61 (24.4%) believe that body changes occur while breastfeeding. 66 (26.4%) felt that fluids other than breastmilk are required to prevent child thirst. 98 (39.2%) stopped breastfeeding while sick. Most of the mothers 247 (98.8%) believed in improvement of mother child bonding with breastfeeding. 237 (94.8%) women think lactating mothers should be well fed. 130 (52%) received counselling sessions before breastfeeding. (Table 3)

Majority of women 210 gave breast milk as first feed to baby, however 40 (16%) women had given prelacteal feeds to their babies. 179 (71.6%) breastfed their baby in <1hr. In spite of knowing the importance of colostrum 12 (4.8%) women discarded it. 239 (95.6%) women clean the breast before breastfeeding. 238 (95.2%) breastfed on both sides. 145 (58%) women wait for baby to burp after feeds. 202 (80.8%) never fed their baby by expressed breast milk. 46 women started bottle feeding, as major reason being maternal employment 18 (7.2%). (Table 4)

Table 1 Distribution of study participants according to knowledge regarding breastfeeding

Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Time of initiation of breast feeding	<1hour	181	72.4
	<1day	43	17.2
	>1day	26	10.4
Colostrum to be given	Yes	238	95.2
	No	12	4.8
Colostrum beneficial to baby	Yes	241	96.4
	No	09	3.6
Breast feed improves child immunity	Yes	243	97.2
	No	07	2.8
Breastfeed help neonatal jaundice	Yes	233	93.2
	No	17	6.8
Duration of exclusive breast feed	3-6months	03	1.2
	6months	92	36.8
	>6months	155	62
Time to start weaning	<3months	04	1.6
	3-6months	36	14.4
	>6months	210	84
Proper position & technique is important in breast feeding	Yes	243	97.2
	No	07	2.8
Breastfeeding causes contraceptive effect	Yes	187	74.8
	No	63	25.2
Breastfeed doesn't lead to maternal malnourishment	Yes	240	96
	No	10	4
Feeds to be given while EBF	Only breast milk	201	80.4
	+water	30	12
	+animal milk	07	2.8
	+glucose water or sugar	12	4.8
	Others		

Table 2 Attitude of study participants towards breastfeeding

Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Feeding manner	On demand	140	56
	Scheduled	74	29.6
	Random	36	14.4
Belief in giving pre-lacteal feeds	To be given	38	15.2
	Not to be given	212	84.8
Formula feeding is preferred than breast feed	Yes	48	18.4
	No	204	81.6
Personal hygiene is maintained while breast feeding	Yes	234	93.6
	No	16	6.4
Breastfeed causes changes in body shape	Yes	61	24.4
	No	189	75.6
Fluids other than breast milk must to prevent thirst	Yes	66	26.4
	No	184	73.6
Stop breast feeding while sick	Yes	98	39.2
	No	152	60.8
Breast feed increase mother child bonding	Yes	247	98.8
	No	03	1.2
Lactating mother's should be well fed	Yes	237	94.8
	No	13	5.2
Received counselling sessions before breast feed	Yes	130	52
	No	120	48

Table 3 Breastfeeding practices among lactating mothers

Characters		Number	Percentage
Per-lacteal feeds given to baby	Yes	40	16
	No	210	84
First feed given to child	Breast milk	210	84
	Honey	12	4.8
	Sugar water	10	4
	Animal milk	08	3.2
	Artificial feed	06	2.4
	Others	04	1.6

Time of first breast feed after delivery	<1hr	179	71.6
	1-6hr	36	14.4
	>6hr	21	8.4
	>24hr	14	5.6
EBF	Given	155	62
	Not given	95	38
COLOSTRUM	Given	238	95.2
	Discarded	12	4.8
Clean breast area before feeding	Yes	239	95.6
	No	11	4.4
Wait for baby to burp after each feed	Yes	145	58
	No	105	42
Feed baby by expressed milk	Yes	48	19.2
	No	202	80.8
Reason for bottle feed	Maternal diseases	2.8	2.8
	Working mother	7.2	7.2
	Child disease	0.4	0.4
	Insufficient milk	4.8	4.8
	Inexperience	1.2	1.2
	Child refusal	0.8	0.9
	Others	3	1.2
Breast feeding on both side of breast	1side	12	4.8
	2sides	238	95.2

DISCUSSION

Regarding knowledge of breastfeeding, 72.4% were aware of starting breastfeeding within 1hr of birth which is almost comparable to study by Chinnasami et al. [15] (80%) and low compared to study by Thomas et al. [14] (39%). Awareness of breastfeeding initiated within hour ranging from 6.3% to 31% as per studies by Dongra et al [12] Oche et al [10] Oche and Umar [8] and Choudhary et al. [7]

Further in our study 80.4% were aware of giving only breastmilk during first 6 months, similar to studies by Vijayalakshmi et al [11] (85.2%), Kumar et al [1] (72%) and Ekanem et al [6] (85.2%)

In our study 96.4% mothers were aware that colostrum is beneficial for babies. This is low compared to study by Vijayalakshmi et al [11] (99%) and more compared to Thomas et al [14] (91%), Kumar et al [1] (94%) and Ben Salma et al [22] (43%).

In our study 95.2% mothers had given colostrum to their babies, which is similar to Thomas et al [14] (91%) and low compared to study by Naseem and Mazher [18] (88%)

In our study 98.8% were aware that breastfeeding increases mother child bonding which is high compared to 49% in a study by Kamath SP et al [4] and similar in a study by Thomas et al [14] (96%)

In our study almost 39.2% mothers thought not to feed while sick which is high as compared to 28% in a study by Thomas et al [14]

CONCLUSION

Breastfeeding knowledge and practices were suboptimal among mothers. Health education lacks behind in educating and counselling women regarding breastfeeding. Efforts by public health workers on breastfeeding counselling and health education should be promoted. Even during covid pandemic, counselling them regarding safe practices of breastfeeding, to avoid neonatal risks, is of importance.

Breastfeeding education to mothers, solutions for working mothers, health care providers training at all levels, breastfeeding campaign and advertisements improves the knowledge attitude and practice of breastfeeding.

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