

Breastfeeding practices among mothers of children less than 2 yrs attending the OPD in a Tertiary Care center

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Abstract

Background

World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding till 6 months of age. It has been clearly proven that breastfeeding protects children against infections disease, allergies, adult disease and promotes physical, motor-mental development. In addition, it benefits the mother in reducing anemia, breast and ovarian cancers, is cost effective and helps fertility control. Therefore the present study was undertaken at Safdarjung Hospital (an urban care tertiary centre, catering to diverse strata of population both literate and illiterate) to study breast feeding practices among mothers and its correlation, if any, with their literacy.

Methodology

A cross sectional study involving 200 healthy mothers, of children less than 2 yrs, who attended pediatric outpatient department (OPD), was conducted. Informed consent was taken. Literates refer to those subjects who could read and write their name. Exit interviews were conducted and data was collected using a pre-coded, structured questionnaire. Chi-square test was applied to calculate statistical significance.

Results

In our study population, 73 % and 27 % constituted literates and illiterates with prevalence of on demand breast feeding 95.9 % and 94.4%, respectively. The prevalence of 6 months exclusive and on demand breastfeeding did not vary significantly ($p > 0.05$) with the educational status of mothers. The practice of giving pre-lacteal feeds was significantly more among illiterate mothers ($p < 0.05$) with honey being the most commonly used Pre-lacteal. To a surprise only 28% mothers knew advantages of colostrum. Also the practice of discarding colostrum was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) among illiterate mother.

Conclusion

The above findings support the need to increase awareness among mothers on the importance of colostrum. Also the myths regarding pre-lacteal feeds should be addressed. This drive may be successfully navigated via formal lactation counseling, infant feeding and management programmes by government and non-government organizations.