Breast Feeding Practices in an Urban Community of Kalamboli, Navi Mumbai

R.N. Kulkarni, S. Anjenaya, R. Gujar

Abstract

Objective: To study the Breast feeding practices & the influence of literacy & cultural factors on breast-feeding practices in mothers attending immunisation clinic in an urban community of Navi-Mumbai. Study Design: Cross-sectional study. Setting: Immunisation clinic, MGM, Kalamboli Hospital. Study Period: October 2001 - March 2002. Study Participants: 122 mothers attending immunisation clinic having children up to 2 years of age. Study variables: Literacy, Time of initiation, Place of delivery. Statistical Analysis: Chi-square test & percentages. Results: 44 (36.1%) mothers gave pre-lacteals to their children. 52 (70.2%) practised exclusive breast-feeding and 9 (7.4%) started bottle feeds to their babies. 61.3% of literate mothers while 43.7% of illiterate mothers initiated breast-feeding within 6 hours of delivery. The association between introduction of pre-lacteals and place of delivery was found to be statistically significant (p<0.05). Only 1.9% of literate mothers had rejected colostrum as against 25% of illiterate mothers. Conclusion: Undesirable cultural practices such as giving pre-lacteal feeds, rejection of colostrum and late initiation of breast feeding are still prevalent among the mothers, more so among illiterates and these should be discouraged by proper IEC activities.

Key Words: Breast feeding practices

Introduction

Breast Feeding is the first fundamental right of the child. The initiation of breast feeding and the timely introduction of adequate safe and appropriate complementary foods in conjunction with continued breast feeding are of prime importance for the growth, development, health and nutrition of infants and children everywhere. The prevalence of breast feeding in India is still high (99% in rural areas and 96% in urban areas as reported in NFHS, 1992-1993). However, there are many cultural practices associated with infant feeding of which certain undesirable practices need to be discouraged. UNICEF & WHO launched Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in 1992 as a part of global effort to protect, promote and support breast feeding. The present study was undertaken to study the Breast feeding practices and the influence of literacy and prevailing cultural factors such as time of initiation of breast feeding, introduction of pre-lacteals and rejection of colostrum

Material and Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted between October 2001 - March 2002. 122 mothers having children up to 2 years of age attending the immunisation clinic in MGM Hospital, Kalamboli, Navi Mumbai constituted the study subjects. A pretested structured proforma was used to record the observations. The observations were analysed statistically.

Results

122 mothers who were interviewed, were in the age range of 18-32 years with the mean age of 24.36 years; 106 (86.8%) were literate while 16 (13.2%) were illiterate (could not read and write in any language). 48 (39.3%) had their children between 0-4 months of age. 74 (60.65%) had their children between 4 months - 2 years of age. 44 (36.1) mothers gave pre-lacteals to their children. Out of 74 mothers having children between 4 months - 2 years of age, 52 (70.2%) had practised exclusive breast feeding up 4-6 month of age. Only nine (7.4%) mothers started bottle feeds to their babies of these 5 did so before 6 months, 3 between 7-12 months and 28 discontinued breast-feeding between 7-12 months of age.

61.3% of literate mothers while 43.7% of illiterate mothers initiated breast feeding within 6 hrs of delivery. Only 15.1% of literate mothers while 31.2% of illiterate mothers initiated breast feeding 24 hrs after delivery.

The association between introduction of pre-lacteals and place of delivery was found to be statistically significant (p<0.05). (Table 1) Higher percentage of illiterate mothers (68.7%) had given pre-lacteals to their children as compared to 31.1% of literate mothers. Only 1.9% of literate mothers and 4.2% of illiterate mothers rejected colostrum as against 25% of illiterate mothers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of delivery</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pre-lacteals</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>02 (25.0)</td>
<td>06 (75.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>76 (66.7)</td>
<td>38 (33.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

116 (95.1%) mothers have fed colostrum to their children which was slightly higher than that reported by Parmar et al who reported acceptance of colostrum to be 81.6%. In 74 mothers having children between 4 months to 2 yrs of age exclusive breast-feeding was found to be 70.2% which is slightly higher than that reported by Banappurmath et al who reported it to be 60% in their study. In the present study demand feeding was found to be 94.2% which is higher than that reported by Bandopadhyay S K et al in their study. 61.3% literate mothers were comparatively more aware of the benefits of early breast-feeding. Parmar et al in their study reported that 51.8% of home delivered and 37.2% of institutionally delivered mothers gave pre-lacteal feeds to their children. The higher percentage of non-use of pre-lacteals in institutional deliveries in our study highlights the importance of health education during perinatal period.

Literacy wise distribution of pre-lacteal feeding and rejection of colostrum shows that these practices were more common in illiterate mothers. The main reasons for rejection of colostrum given by mothers were “it is harmful for the baby”, “elders advice” and “it is not digested by the newborn”. Thus literacy plays a very vital role in understanding the protective value of colostrum and the dangers of pre-lacteal feeding. The reasons for early discontinuation of breast-feeding (below 6 months) were mainly illness of mother while insufficient milk was the reason given by mothers who discontinued breast-feeding between 7-12 months. In the present study
66 (82.5%) mothers initiated weaning within 6 months of age which is higher than that observed by Gajanana et al who reported 17.83% in that age group of their study.

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**References**